XXIIIrd Olympiad

DQ

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LA
84
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LA 84: Games of the XXIII Olympiad

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EDITOR'S NOTES

Is it possible to create a sense of place in a city without a center, a city whose essential identity, according to architectural historian Reyner Banham, is that it " . . . has no urban form at all in the commonly accepted sense?"

Born in Los Angeles—as was Joseph Giovannini, whose impressions of the Olympics follow—I grew up along with that city's proliferating freeway system. Therefore, the creation of a central identity for the city, through the means of temporary, environmental design, seemed to me an impossible task. Yet last June the air was filled with optimism at the 8th Street workshop leased for the team of sixty designers who were working on the XXIII Olympiad. Colorful models of the game sites and of the freeways and major thoroughfares leading to them were the first evidence of the visual unity that was to tie the entire region together.

Accepting the possibility that design could accomplish this end, the next question was, how? Unlike many of the earlier Games, the Los Angeles Olympics was not government sponsored. (Its budget was about five percent of that for the Moscow Games of 1980.) Therefore, the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee's (LAOOC) most astute early decision, based on the experiences of cities whose monumental Olympic white elephants are often unhappy reminders of their Games, was to renovate and use twenty-six existing athletic facilities. To these they added only one new swimming pool and one cycling track within a one-hundred-mile radius of downtown Los Angeles.

With that, and with limited financial means, the athletic sites, the forty-two cultural venues and the athletes' three residential villages were designed to: have an essentially ephemeral physical quality; be celebratory in nature; work visually on site and on TV; and express the international character of the Games. The last criterion was especially significant for Los Angeles, which is a truly international city. It was, therefore, quite natural to have that characteristic become a major design emphasis. Enormous Asian and Spanish speaking populations give this relatively young region a stability and sense of history that is lacking in many of our western cities.

This issue of *Design Quarterly* can provide only a partial record of the designs created for the Los Angeles Games. Partial, as space does not permit us to present it all, and partial, because our author was able to attend only a handful of the many events. With those limitations in mind, we have devoted this permanent record to a temporary phenomenon in order to show festival design, undertaken on a truly grand scale, at its inventive best. Further, the photographs seen in most publications about the Olympics have been of the Games themselves, with the tents, banners, Sonotubes, et al, very much in the background. As our purpose here is to focus on the extraordinary environments designed for the Games, athletes seen in this account are viewed as secondary to their surroundings.

Without the creative energies of The Jerde Partnership, under the direction of Jon Jerde and David Meckel, and of Sussman/Prejza & Co., directed by Deborah Sussman and Paul Prejza, the LA Olympics would have been vastly diminished as a visual event. The Jerde Partnership's previous projects have involved large numbers of people—planning and design of communities, shopping malls, entire commercial districts. Sussman/Prejza & Co. has created environmental graphics, corporate identity programs, restaurant and store design, and urban decorations for activities around the world. These two offices were, consequently, brilliant choices to undertake the complex design issues of these Olympic Games.

We are grateful for assistance generously given to this project by the LAOOC, the ambitious, audacious group of citizens behind the Los Angeles Games, and to Sussman/Prejza & Co. for its design of this issue.

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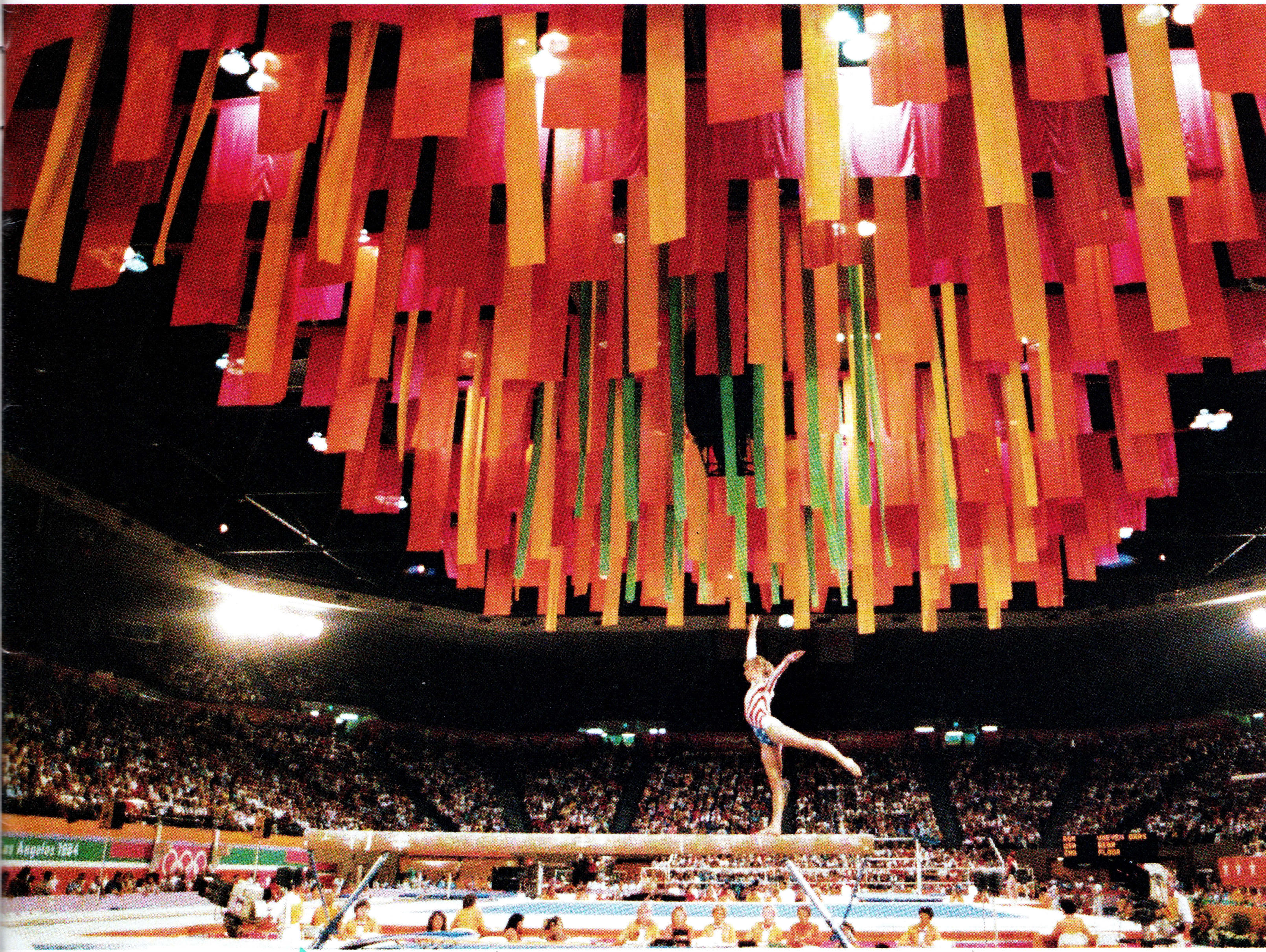
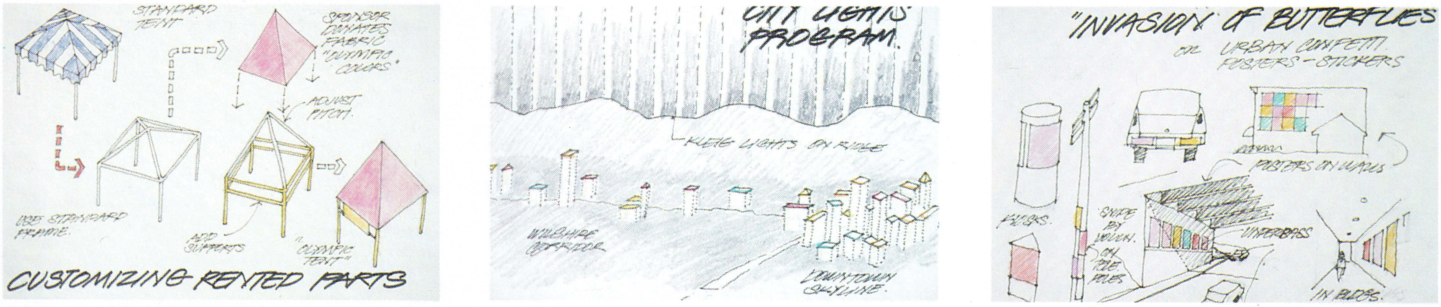

s Angeles 1984
UNEVEN BARS
BEAM
FLOOR

*"The glorious colors—the banners, the kiosks and booths, even the trash cans and hot dog napkins—were happily original, all Toyland confetti, in light and airy shades all their own. We get enough of red-white-and-blue everywhere else, don't we?"**

**Credits for ephemera on inside back cover.*


STANDARD TENT
SPONSOR DONATES FABRIC "OLYMPIC COLORS"
ADJUST PITCH.
USE STANDARD FRAME.
ADD SUPPORTS
"OLYMPIC TENT"
CUSTOMIZING RENTED PARTS
CITY LIGHTS PROGRAM.
KLEIG LIGHTS ON RIDGE
WILSHIRE CORRIDOR
DOWNTOWN SKYLINE
"INVASION OF BUTTERFLIES
OR URBAN CONFETTI
POSTERS - STICKERS
POSTERS ON WALLS
KIOSKS.
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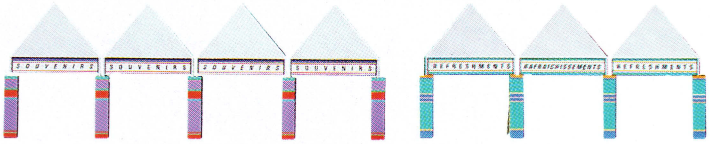
UNDERPASS
IN BLDGS.

A pattern language on 3 x 5 cards.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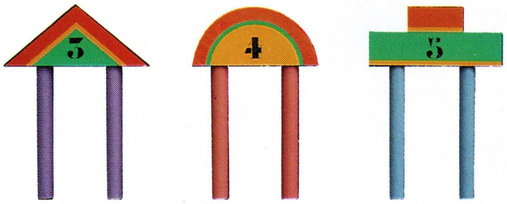

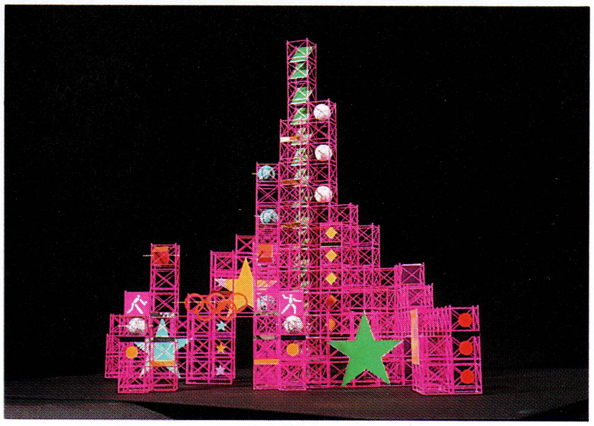

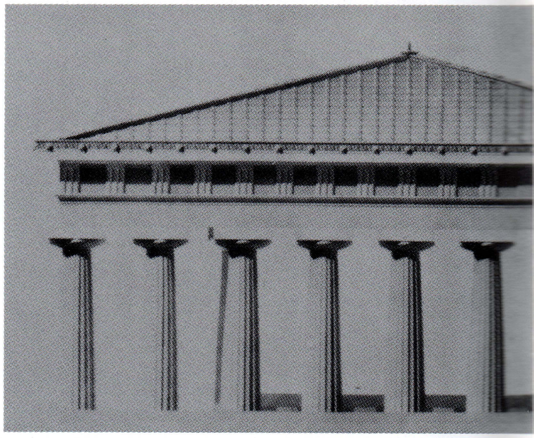

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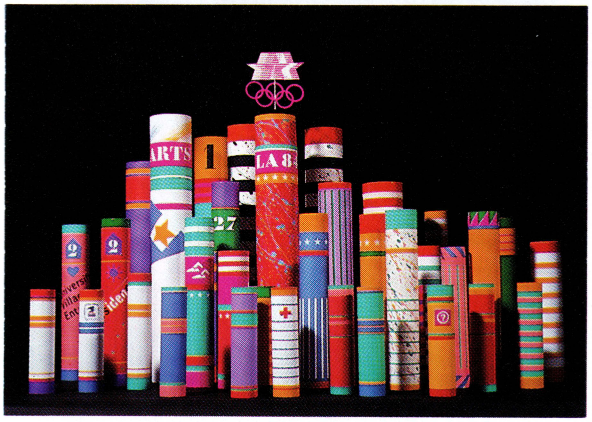
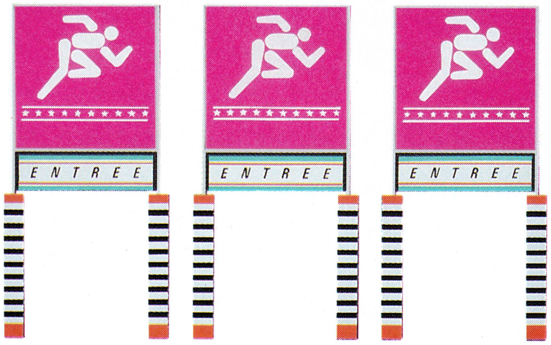

ARTS
LA 84
27

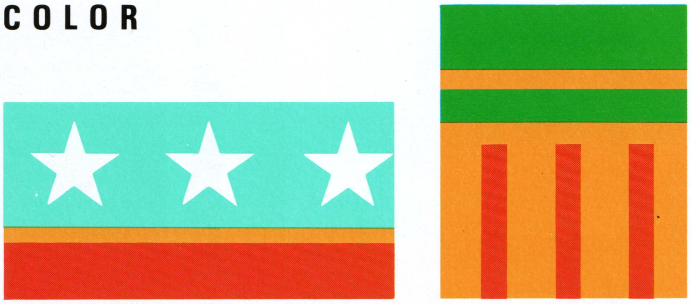

ENTREE
ENTREE
ENTREE

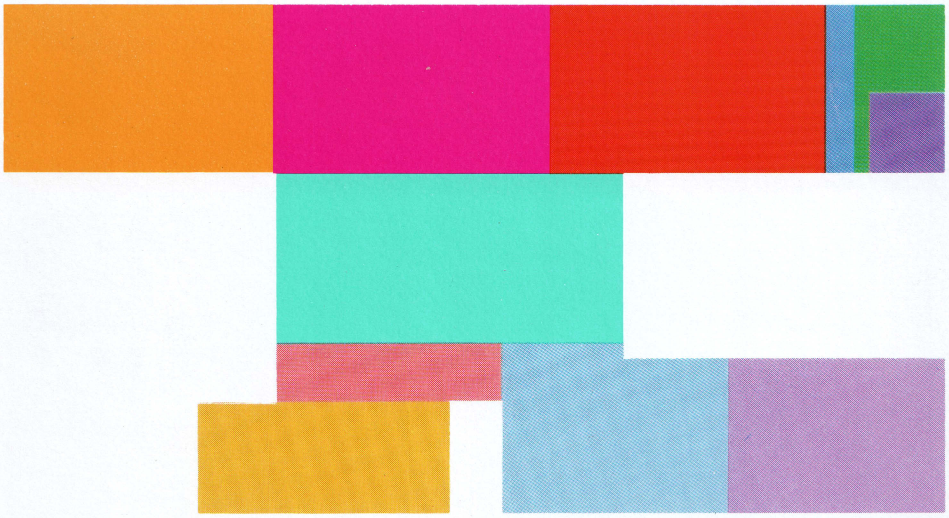
A pattern language was devised to guide the development of the infill architecture needed at the villages and competition sites. The limited time from the start of design to the start of the Games meant that existing technologies and parts would have to be used. The limited duration of the Games and Los Angeles's climate allowed the use of rather fragile, ephemeral materials. Sonotube columns and special tops transformed rental tents into imaginative pavilions. The building-block tops were coded to the function of the tent: quarter-round tops for entry tents, tall wizard's hat pyramids for information tents.

Blocklike shapes were also used for portals reminiscent of classical architecture—a bow to the forms of earlier Olympics. Pediments were flat, graphic. In the same way, Sonotubes, standing alone or in colonnades, had graphic banding instead of bases, capitals and fluting. At a larger scale, magenta and aqua scaffolding formed gateways and monumental towers. These were punctuated with ornaments: nylon louvers, plywood cutouts and fiberglass spheres.

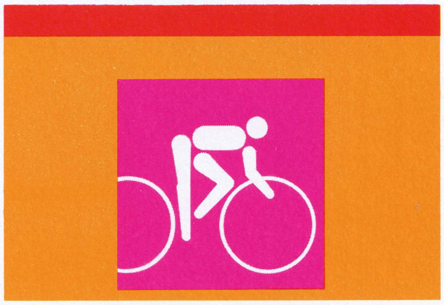
Even the earliest concepts were festival-like.

COLOR



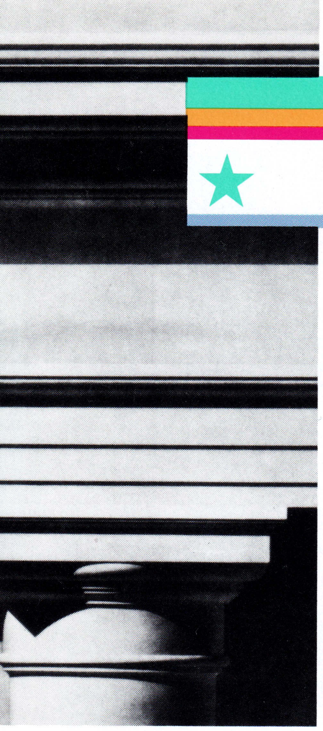


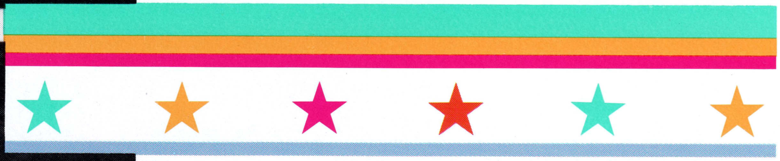
The palette consisted of unexpected, stimulating juxtapositions. It suggested Mexican markets, mariachi, Los Angeles and the Pacific Rim.

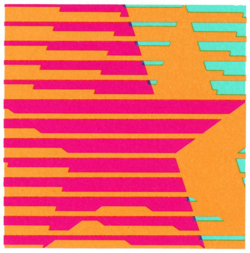


A controlled color vocabulary was essential to creating a sense of place and time. The Olympic colors were unexpected and exciting—they stood apart from the norm, the everyday. Magenta, hot and vibrant, was the basic color on which the easily recognizable Olympic palette was built: sports pictograms were white on magenta; freeway signs were magenta with aqua; the play of magenta against chrome yellow, vermilion and aqua were the most important relationships of the palette. Magenta, chrome yellow and vermilion are colors of the Pacific Rim—Mexico and the Orient. Aqua is Mediterranean, cool and refreshing against the hotter Pacific colors.

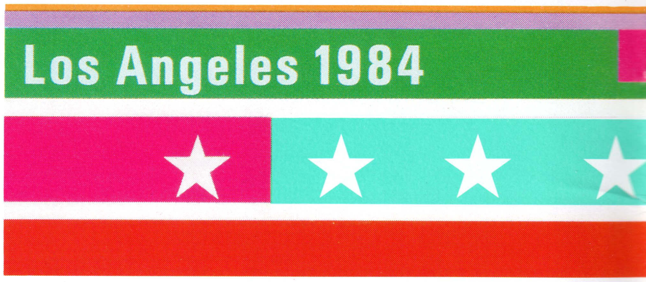
The colors were generally used in combinations of three or more, and the palette could be divided to produce enormous variety. Each competition site had a color scheme within the palette that related to the character of its specific sport and to the ambient color and lighting. Gymnastics was vermilion, chrome yellow and green; swimming used fields of aqua and white.





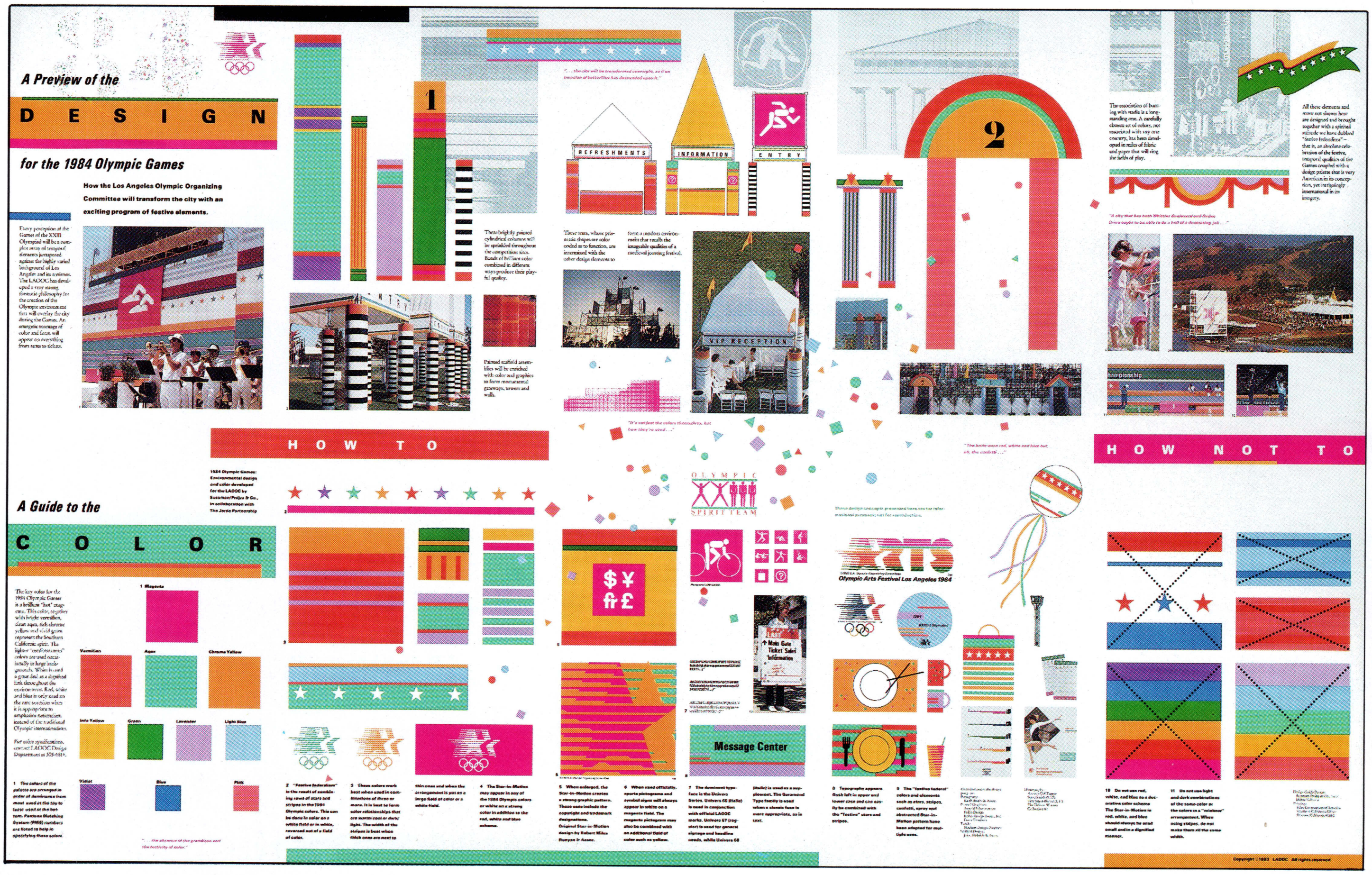


Association of National Olympic Committees General Assembly Los Angeles



GRAPHICS

The most ceremonial juxtaposition consisted of magenta, vermilion, chrome yellow, and aqua stars on a white field within bands of aqua, light blue and magenta. The layering of stripes, lighter color next to darker, thick next to thin is an abstraction of the logo of the Los Angeles Games. The stars and bars of the American flag combined in the Star-in-Motion logo were pulled apart to form a graphic version of architectural molding. This pattern was used extensively for signs, banners and decorative panels. The other important graphic pattern was a more direct abstraction from the logo. Sliding bars of color from a giant Star-in-Motion made large backgrounds on the fields of play. Repeated views of this pattern behind the athletes on television and in photography brought visual unity to the Olympics for a world-wide audience and a heightened awareness that this was the Olympics and that this was Los Angeles.



A Preview of the

DESIGN

for the 1984 Olympic Games

How the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee will transform the city with an exciting program of festive elements.

Every perception of the Games of the XXIII Olympiad will be a complex array of temporal elements juxtaposed against the highly varied background of Los Angeles and its environs. The LAOOC has developed a very strong thematic philosophy for the creation of the Olympic environment that will overlay the city during the Games. An energetic montage of color and form will appear on everything from tents to tickets.

These brightly painted cylindrical columns will be sprinkled throughout the competition sites. Bands of brilliant color combined in different ways produce their playful quality.

These tents, whose prismatic shapes are color coded as to function, are intermixed with the other design elements to form a modern environment that recalls the imageable qualities of a medieval jousting festival.

Painted scaffold assemblies will be enriched with color and graphics to form monumental gateways, towers and walls.

The association of bunting with stadia is a long-standing one. A carefully chosen set of colors, not associated with any one country, has been developed in miles of fabric and paper that will ring the fields of play.

All these elements and more not shown here are designed and brought together with a spirited attitude we have dubbed "festive federalism" – that is, an absolute celebration of the festive, temporal qualities of the Games coupled with a design palette that is very American in its conception, yet intriguingly international in its integrity.

HOW TO

1984 Olympic Games: Environmental design and color developed for the LAOOC by Sussman/Prejza & Co., in collaboration with The Jerde Partnership

A Guide to the

COLOR

The key color for the 1984 Olympic Games is a brilliant "hot" magenta. This color, together with bright vermilion, clean aqua, rich chrome yellow and vivid green represent the Southern California spirit. The lighter "mediterranean" colors are used occasionally in large backgrounds. White is used a great deal as a dignified link throughout the environment. Red, white and blue is only used on the rare occasion when it is appropriate to emphasize nationalism instead of the traditional Olympic internationalism.

For color specifications, contact LAOOC Design Department at 305-8814.

1 Magenta

Vermilion

Aqua

Chrome Yellow

Inta Yellow

Green

Lavender

Light Blue

Violet

Blue

Pink

1 The colors of the palette are arranged in order of dominance from most used at the top to least used at the bottom. Pantone Matching System (PMS) numbers are listed to help in specifying these colors.

2 "Festive federalism" is the result of combining rows of stars and stripes in the 1984 Olympic colors. This can be done in color on a white field or in white, reversed out of a field of color.

3 These colors work best when used in combinations of three or more. It is best to form color relationships that are warm/cool or dark/light. The width of the stripes is best when thick ones are next to thin ones and when the arrangement is put on a large field of color or a white field.

4 The Star-in-Motion may appear in any of the 1984 Olympic colors or white on a strong color in addition to the red, white and blue scheme.

5 When enlarged, the Star-in-Motion creates a strong graphic pattern. These uses include the copyright and trademark designations. Original Star-in-Motion design by Robert Miles Runyan & Assoc.

6 When used officially, sports pictograms and symbol signs will always appear in white on a magenta field. The magenta pictogram may also be combined with an additional field of color such as yellow.

7 The dominant typeface is the Univers Series. Univers 66 (italic) is used in conjunction with official LAOOC marks. Univers 67 (regular) is used for general signage and headline needs, while Univers 68 (italic) is used as a supplement. The Garamond Type family is used when a classic face is more appropriate, as in text.

8 Typography appears flush left in upper and lower case and can easily be combined with the "festive" stars and stripes.

9 The "festive federal" colors and elements such as stars, stripes, confetti, spray and abstracted Star-in-Motion pattern have been adapted for multiple uses.

HOW NOT TO

10 Do not use red, white, and blue as a decorative color scheme. The Star-in-Motion in red, white, and blue should always be used small and in a dignified manner.

11 Do not use light and dark combinations of the same color or the colors in a "rainbow" arrangement. When using stripes, do not make them all the same width.

"...the city will be transformed overnight, as if an invasion of butterflies has descended upon it."

"It's not just the colors themselves, but how they're used..."

"A city that has both Whittier Boulevard and Rodeo Drive ought to be able to do a hell of a decorating job..."

"The bride wore red, white and blue but oh, the confetti..."

"...the absence of the grandiose and the festivity of color."

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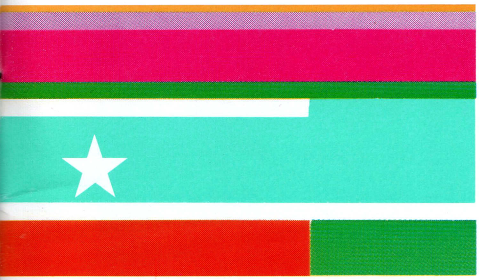
LA's *Graphic* GAMES

Joseph Giovannini



A design and color guide, *opposite*, introduced a rapidly growing design team to the kit of parts, the graphics and the palette.

The Pasadena Civic Auditorium was, I remembered from my high school days there, a large and impressive building, but one that seemed, essentially, ours. My brother played there in the high school orchestra; later, I did. I had passed it so frequently that the building was an assumption in my personal landscape I no longer really saw.

But on 1 June 1984, more than twenty years after I left the Pasadena area, on the opening night of the Olympic Arts Festival, it was a different Civic. I realized that the Renaissance-style building is intimately scaled and comfortably small, and that it now belonged, thanks to the Olympic Arts Festival and the Games, to a much larger audience. If the Arts Festival was a series of cultural events leading to the XXIII Olympiad, this theater was its gateway: the evening was of international import; the dance troupe, the Pina Bausch Wuppertaler Tanztheater, was German; I recognized the audience had come from all over Los Angeles. The scale of the Olympics had succeeded in overcoming the distances that have so long kept Los Angeles from itself: Angelenos seemed at last united in a single place that was itself transformed by the event. In two decades, the area had passed from being a comfortably provincial place to one that had the poise and scope of a world city. The city was at a marking moment in its maturity. That night in Pasadena, there was a sense not only of the rest of the world but, perhaps more surprisingly, of the rest of Los Angeles.

During the preparations for the Olympics, the Los Angeles architect Jon Jerde suggested to Harry Usher, General Manager of the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee, that the Olympics would transform the city, and that the transformation could be controlled, ordered and designed. The results of their conversation were visible on the plaza in Pasadena that night in the form of signs, building banners, flags, large, freestanding fragments of stars, and a high-profile, yellow and white information stand, with a tall, attenuated pyramidal roof, charmingly like a dunce cap. Much of the form language—architecture, graphics, color—was created by the Santa Monica design firm Sussman/Prejza, which, with The Jerde Partnership, coordinated the look of the Olympics. Printed graphics were coordinated by Larry Klein, working as director of design for the LAOOC.

Beyond the forty-three art sites, twenty-eight game venues and three villages, the Olympics was settling all over the southland and many people from small communities felt included in the Olympics simply because the Games came near their towns. "The people at Coto de Caza think the pentathlon is their sport," commented Usher in an interview. While the Games were the most dispersed ever held, setting a new organizational approach that obviated building hugely expensive centralized sports facilities, the Games also helped re-center Los Angeles. Track and field events, among the most ancient, remain the core sports of the Olympics, and they were held in Exposition Park, at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, next to the University of Southern California and near downtown, as they had been in 1932. The Olympics refreshed and reanimated this important but somewhat bypassed part of Los Angeles; this re-centering through the Olympics dovetailed with the downtown redevelopment efforts that have long been underway. I drove throughout the area, attended arts events in Hollywood, Westwood, Pasadena, and sports in Inglewood as well as downtown and the village at UCLA.

The transformation of Los Angeles, then, was not only in the temporary decoration at the sites, but also one of perception—that Los Angeles emerged as a coherent place because it had collected itself behind a single event. By the end of the Games, near the end of the summer it was clear that Los Angeles was capable of not just coping with an international event, but of doing it within budget, in an orderly and spirited way.

FOUR STAR
THE RIGHT STUFF
SUDDEN IMPACT

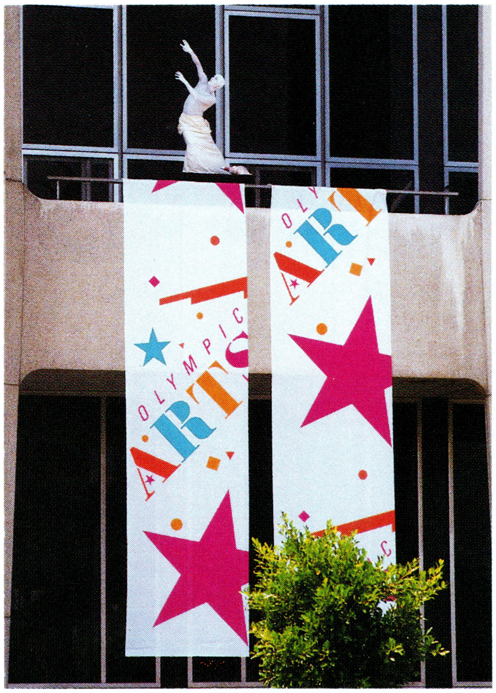
While Montreal, for example, was weaker for having held the Games, Los Angeles was stronger. The graphics and architectural program, though transitory rather than monumental, played no small part in establishing the style and spirit of this extraordinarily buoyant Olympics. The urbanism of the Olympics rather than its architecture became an issue when the city decided not to erect any new buildings but to hold events in existing facilities widely dispersed in the area. This meant, wrote David Weaver in *Los Angeles Architect,* "The implied devaluation of architecture as a communicative art form." The implication, more accurately, was the devaluation of monumental architecture. The temporary architecture and urban decoration created by the Jerde and Sussman/Prejza offices, in fact, had considerable power to mark and shape the events and the city. One is reminded of the baroque firework facades of Italy—great edifices designed to be ignited; momentary buildings.

Frank Hotchkiss, Director of Comprehensive Planning for the Southern California Association of Governments, said that the dispersal of the Games was appropriate to the urban dispersal of the area. The essential question, however, was whether the dispersal of southern California would fragment the Games as a coherent occasion, or whether the Olympics would bring the area together. With a field of urban play no less than 450 square miles, and a budget of slightly over ten million dollars, learning how to use Los Angeles as a city during the Games was a matter of inventing a procedure and attitude toward its layout. There were, as well, three separate Olympic audiences—local residents, spectators, and approximately two billion television viewers, and three ways of viewing: from the seat of a car, the seat of an arena, or an armchair.

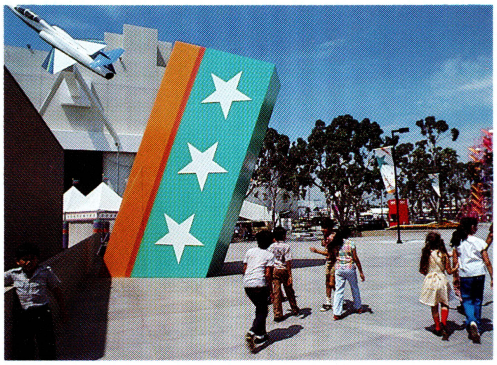
Like a movie set, venues were designed to be seen from specific camera angles. Because of the consistency of the designs to be used in the venues,

OLYMPIC ARTS
SOUVENIRS

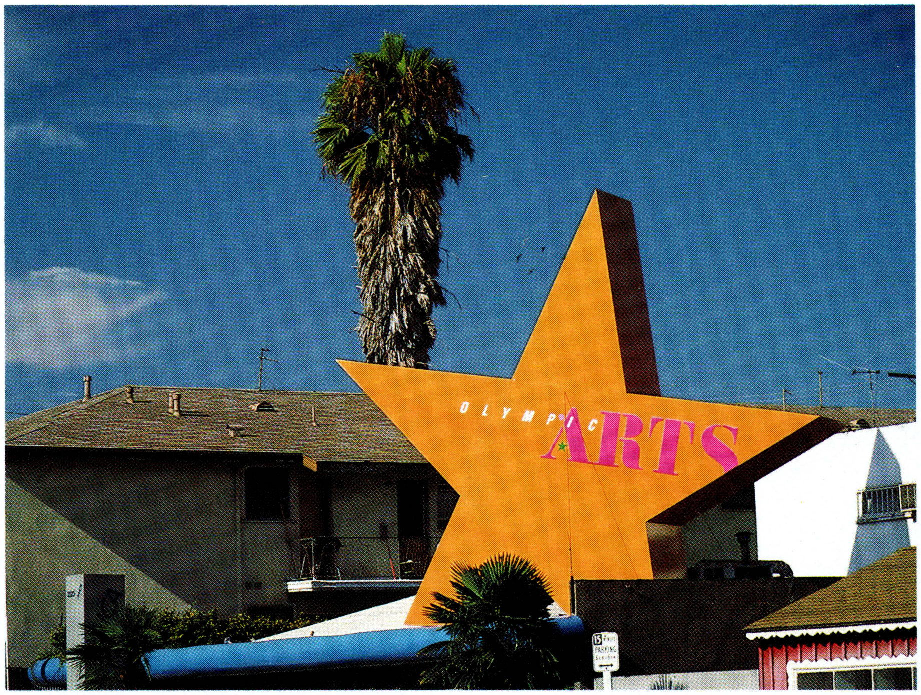
Giant fragments of Olympic stars and bars identified the Arts Festival venues. Stars, *opposite and below*, at the Museum of Natural History and on the roof of the Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art. Giant bars, *below*, at the Aerospace Museum and at the Music Center.

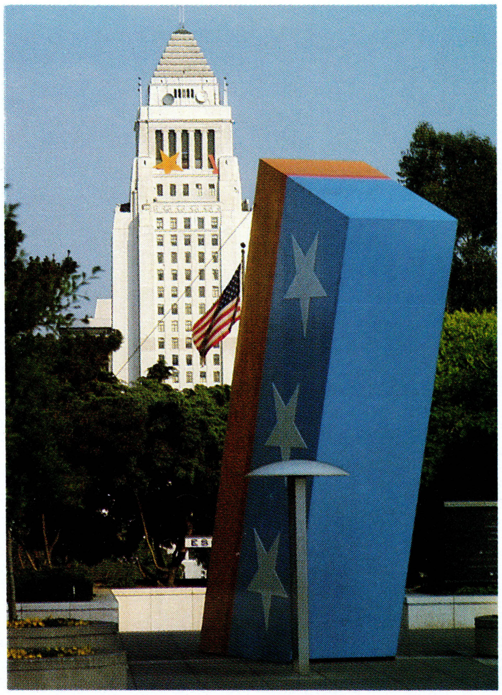


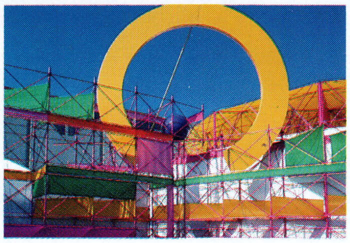
"There will be great visual continuity on TV," said Mr. Jerde before the Olympics. From the point of view of a TV audience, there was also a great continuity across sites—the screen focused the events so that there was a television urbanism that eliminated the distances in the city. The architectural writer Barbara Flanagan observed that the permanent legacy of the Games would be film footage. Jerde said, "It will be impossible not to understand from the colors, patterns and logo always in view that this is Los Angeles, 1984." The film, in fact, would make the decorations in some way permanent—the footage was itself a site.

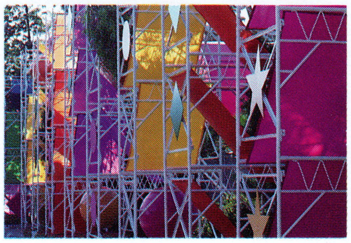


"The swirling, flapping, ever-changing blizzard of color that spotted the city fortified the spirit of celebration."









According to Jerde the basic design problem was that Los Angeles, with few landmarks, looks placeless; he and the other designers saw the task as one of creating "places" in what appears to be a relatively featureless cityscape. "What was interesting," he concluded, "was that it was easy to make place." Originally, the designers wanted to give the city a sense of place, and also a sense of occasion, by making it look as though an invasion of butterflies had just occurred, like American monarchs landing in Pacific Grove. They would do this with a graphically coordinated system of elements, such as bumper stickers, banners, pennants and flags. The concept shifted, however, to that of urban confetti—the city would be sprinkled with a random assortment of freestanding or applied objects and graphics, sparse in some areas, more intense in others. Just as a dispersed Olympics actually made sense in Los Angeles, confetti agreed with Los Angeles's irregular cityscape. The confetti took form in a range of objects, from large freestanding stars to street stenciling. Stars "fell," for example, on the roof of the Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art on South Robertson, the plaza of ARCO Towers, and on the City Hall and Los Angeles Public Library towers. Confetti did not preclude other more regular approaches to urban decoration, such as the extensive program of street banners along major routes— a program carved out by the Santa Monica graphics studio, Hinsche & Associates.

The graphic and architectural program went through other related conceptual phases, some tinged with sloganism—"festive federalism" and "mariachi federalism," and what finally emerged from a series of meetings between the Sussman/Prejza office, The Jerde Partnership and consultant Lou Danziger was a set of colors and a set of forms or "kit of parts," and rules for their application. Deborah Sussman, the graphic designer, looked to festivals around the world, including those of Asia and the Pacific, for forms and colors, but she also looked

SPORTS VENUES

★ SCAFFOLDING

Structures of rented scaffolding greeted the Olympic spectators. Weightlifting, Volleyball, and the UCLA Village, *top*. At Wrestling, *left*, a tower of scaffolding counterpointed the form of an existing identification structure. At Archery, a twenty-foot pictogram floated before vermilion louvers and silver spheres.

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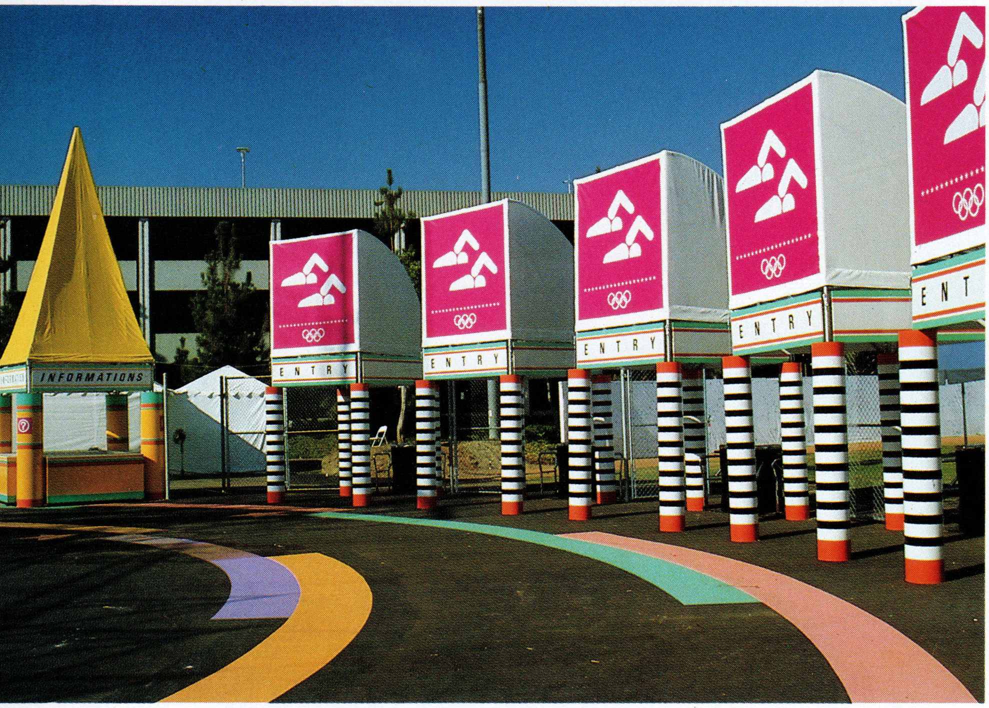
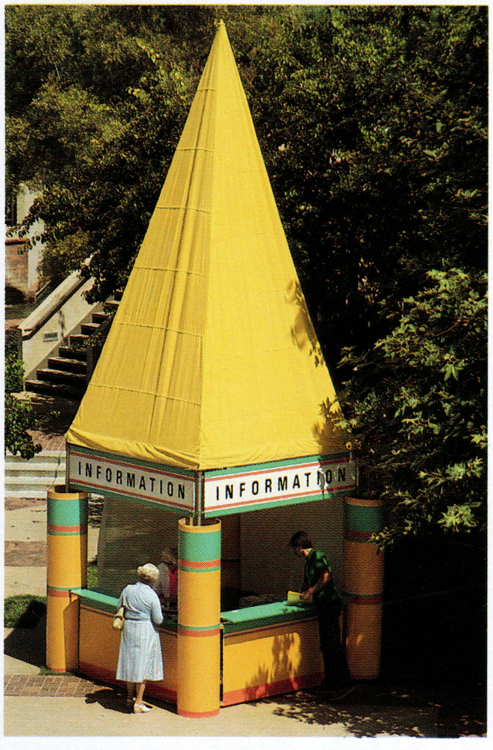




"These Olympics will be remembered for their absence of pomposity and lack of the grandiose."

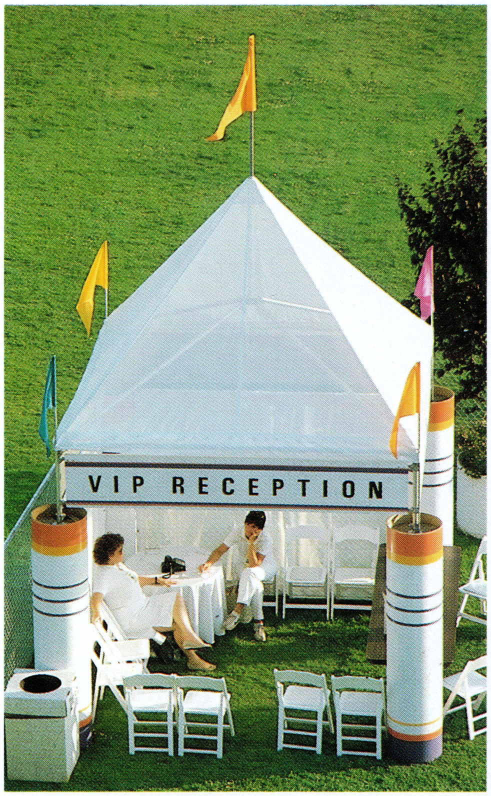
★ TENTS

Each kit-of-parts tent had a characteristic look: quarter-round tops and zebra columns for entry tents, tall wizard's hat pyramids for the information kiosks. The entry tents were grouped to form a court at Swimming, *above*.

closer to home, taking inspiration from such disparate sources as Sister Mary Corita's religious processions at Immaculate Heart College in Los Angeles in the 1950s, used car lots and even everyday street signage. Eclecticism was the product of necessity. "You don't have a building to work with, you have air. You string up cables and make things flutter," she said. Tiny reflectors, usually seen on storefronts or billboards, were used to cover parts of the tallest towers in Exposition Park, making them into brilliant plates of light. The towers were an improbable cross between Tatlin's constructivist tower, which inspired the Jerde office, and a majorette's costume. The decorative use of chain link fencing, especially intense at the Olympic villages for security reasons, said Mr. Jerde, came from the architecture of Frank O. Gehry.

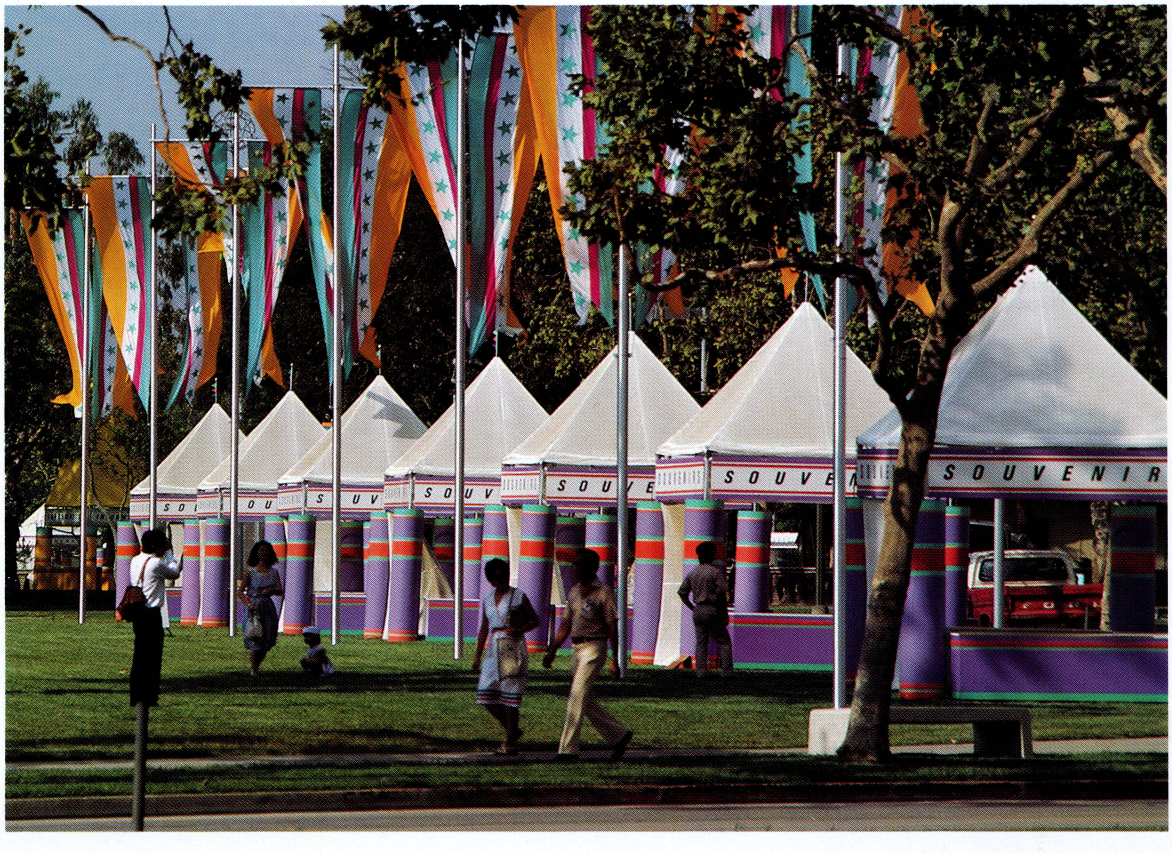
The combined efforts of the Sussman/Prejza and Jerde offices resulted in what might be called graphic architecture. Each wall of the judges' stands at UCLA, for example, was painted a different color, and painted to look perfectly flat: occupants of these stands looked as though they were walking between sheets of paper. In other constructions with a stronger three-dimensionality, such as the village gateways, the very opaque, flatly applied colors imparted a graphic look by heightening a sense of surface.

Most of the sports venues had to be augmented with various service structures for information, refreshments and reception. In some cases bleachers had to be erected in which *entradas* and other functional and articulating elements were designed. For this vast program of temporary structures, the architects decided to choose cheap, modular and rentable building materials. Scaffolding, for example, was used in marvelous structures by the Los Angeles architect John Aleksich at the weight-lifting venue. The Jerde office developed a columnar system of Sonotubes, normally used as forms for concrete columns, but here used without the concrete as the column itself.



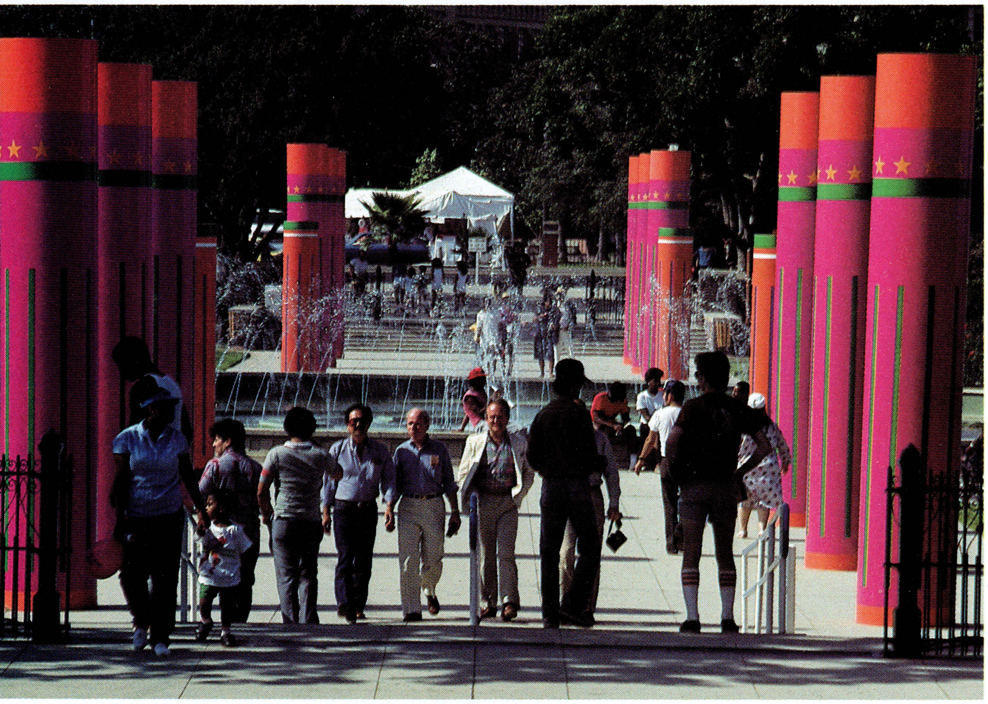
The office also developed a system of party tents, divided between visible or so-called "look" tents that were somewhat altered, and back-of-house service tents, set up as rented. Jerde said, "The ten by ten foot tent was our basic brick." The designers emphasized the temporary quality of the architecture by heightening its surface qualities—even the chain link fence was painted aqua, too fragile to last long. The color palette—magenta, aqua, vermilion, chrome yellow—also emphasized the ephemeral.

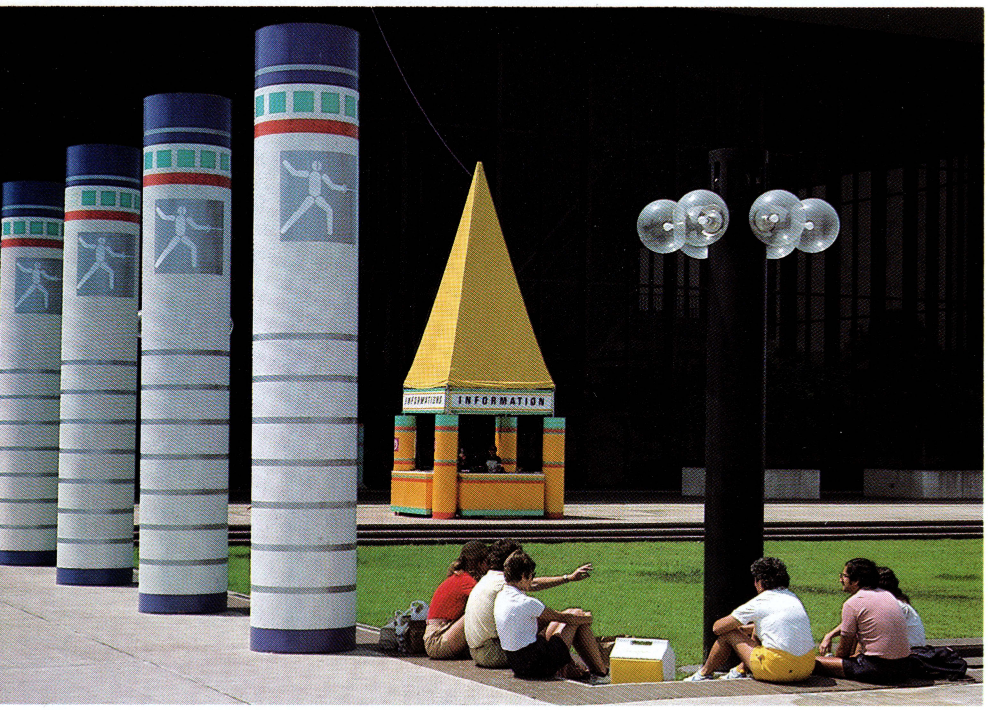
The Arts Festival, after its 1 June start with the Pina Bausch performance, quickly expanded so that by mid-June and through late July there were approximately ten different performances a night, tapering to a close as the Games themselves started on 28 August. The urban decorations were installed first at the cultural venues, where they stayed even after the event closed.



The ten by ten foot tent was the basic module for enclosed space. The tents stood alone or were grouped as at Exposition Park, *left*, where they recalled the look of a medieval tournament.

SPORTS VENUES



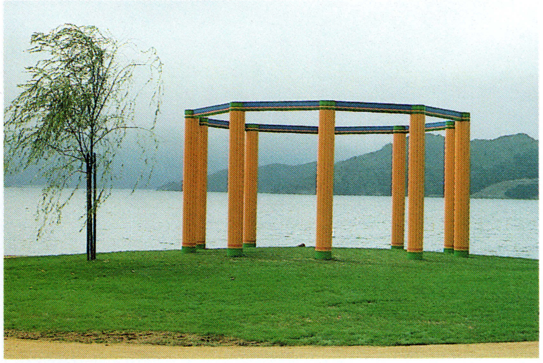


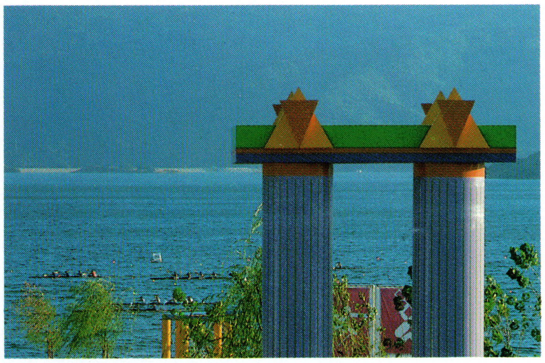
The strategy was to decorate the city cumulatively, so that as the Games approached, the decoration grew more dense and also more intense—starting with a cool palette, including a lot of white, and gradually becoming hotter. The Arts Festival complemented the Olympics by broadening the audience, and by giving the sound mind back to the sound body. It also gave the Games a running momentum.

The diverse international shows were characterized by a consistently festive, positive tone, emanating partially from the tents, streamers and assorted urban confetti. While all recent Olympics have had decorative components, these were developed in depth in Los Angeles, providing a sum total that was surprisingly exuberant for an official function. Certainly the colors were unexpected: pure, direct colors that in the brilliant sun seemed to hover over the surfaces on which they were painted. Some installations, such as the gateway to the UCLA Village, with its magenta vault, seemed to be environments of pure color, because the intensity of the colors made the structures seem incorporeal. At times the colors created serendipities, as when someone walking beneath a yellow canopy was cast in a yellow light. In the vast Rose Garden of Exposition Park, visitors were occasionally taking pictures of green stripes against a magenta field on a colonnade of Sonotubes. Together, the green and magenta vibrated; the subject of these photographs was color alone, a rare subject for amateur photographers.

Despite the elaborate attention paid to the kit of parts at Game venues, simple street banners were the most conspicuous part of the urban decoration program. The basic clip-on principle of decorating the streets was similar to the entire staging philosophy of the Olympics in Los Angeles. The banners would be affixed to poles already there, just as events were held in existing facilities.

Principal streets were scouted in advance for suitable poles. The most successful of the banners were along Wilshire Boulevard, where they were





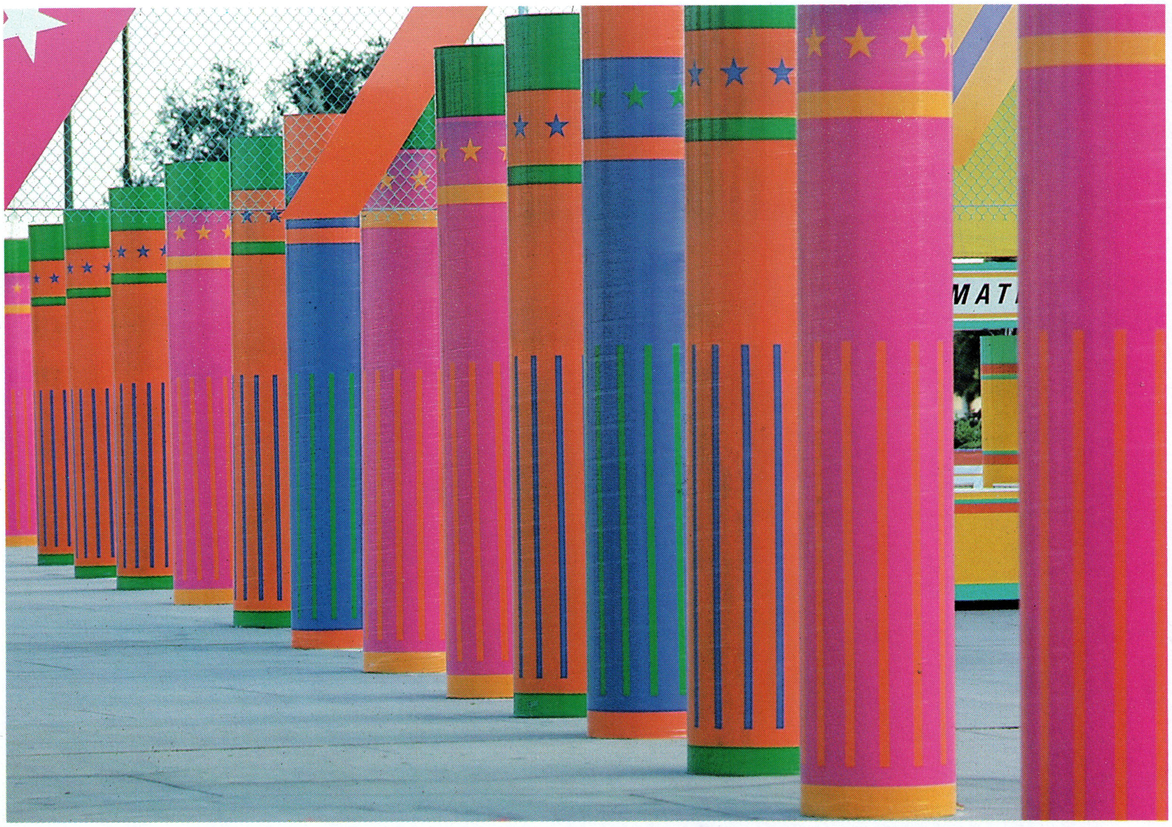
generously sized, and held so that they would have a certain amount of play. Most of the banners were uniform in color—rather abstract for flags, which have always been a type of occasional signage. The designers had been advised that if the decorations had any Olympic designation, they would be stolen as souvenirs.

None, however, had the generosity or nobility of, for example, the great Florentine and Siennese festival banners, and along certain streets they were actually small and much too tightly tethered—the tethering a result of city restrictions that were not transcended by the designers.

> *"We wanted to be fragile—ephemeral."*

★ SONOTUBES

Instant avenues led spectators to the competitions. Archery, Athletics and Fencing, *opposite*. A Sonotube tempietto and Sonotube portals overlooked the rowing and canoeing events.

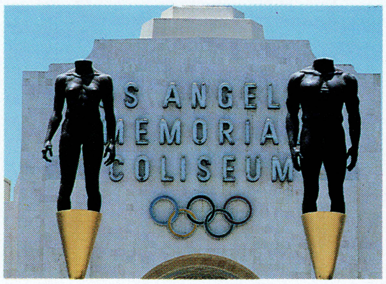


Tokyo 1964
Mexico City 1968

No banners or signs, other than Sussman/Prejza's succinct directional graphics were allowed on the freeways, so people who drove mainly on freeways that did not happen to pass game venues could miss most evidence of the Olympics, and the sense of its festivity. For these people, even though Angelenos, the color of the Olympics was on TV.

For the 1932 Games the city planted about 35,000 trees, most of them palms, along principal avenues leading to Exposition Park—part of a city beautification program for the X Olympiad that still survives. In 1984, the arts sites and especially the sports venues were temporary islands in the cities, most with decoration radiating several blocks from each site. As you approached The Forum in Inglewood, for example, the tempo of the decoration accelerated, and driving around the bend on La Tijera Boulevard, you encountered a very tall decorated tower. Long thin streamers, reminiscent of oriental festivals, flew from light standards in the parking lot.

EXPOSITION PARK



People without tickets to events at the Coliseum still gathered at Exposition Park to take part in the Olympic festival. There they saw Robert Graham's sculpture, *above*, and the 145-foot scaffolding tower, *opposite*.

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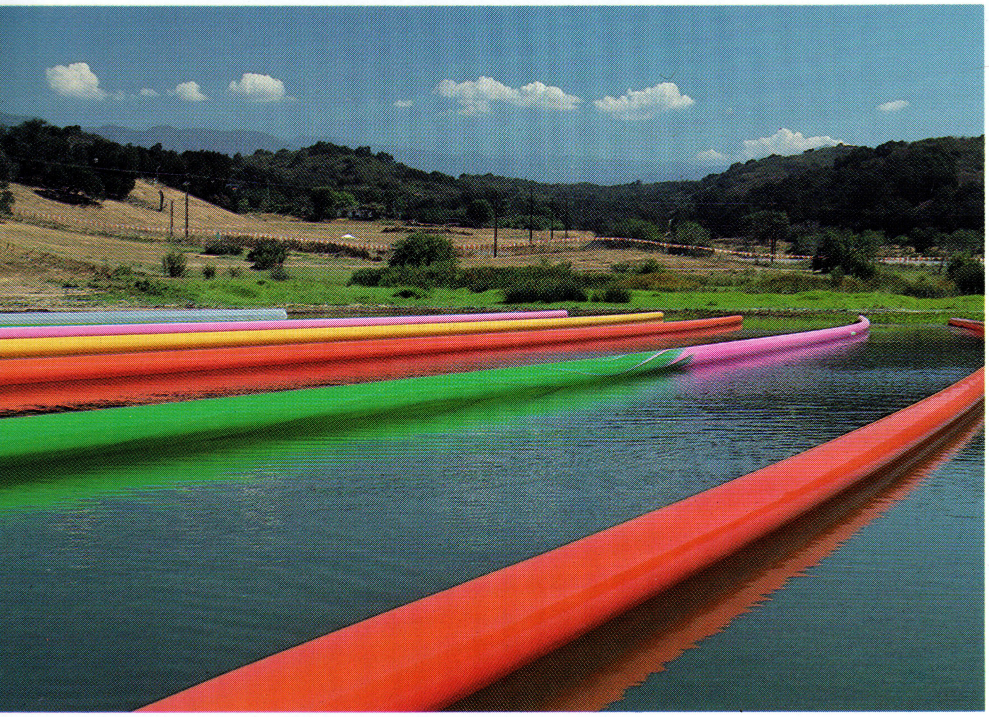
GAMES

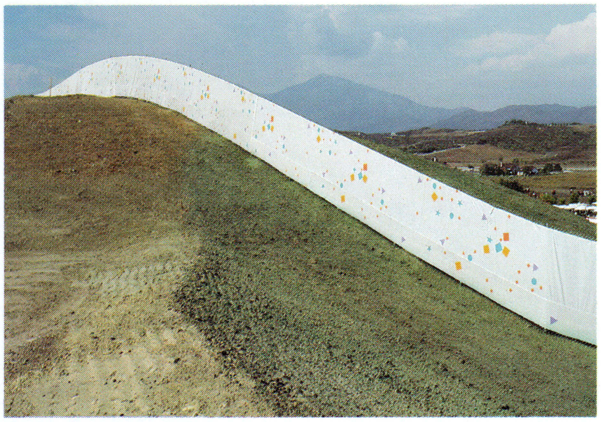


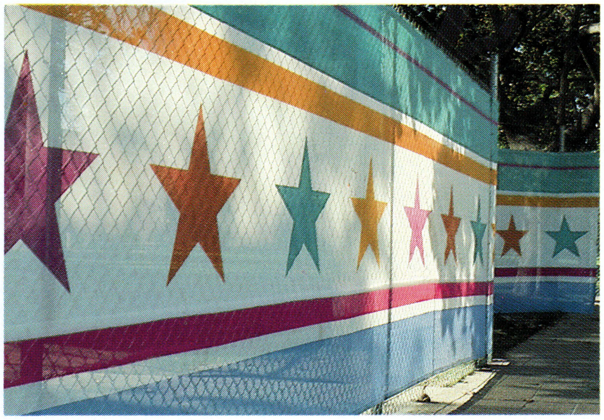
The Games also had their de facto monumental architecture, though sidelined, in the form of the just completed, architecturally unprecedented addition to the Aerospace Museum of the California Museum of Science and Industry, by Frank Gehry. Adjacent to the Coliseum, it was an Olympic building only by proximity, but certainly fit company for the world class buildings associated with the Rome, Tokyo, Mexico City and Munich games. While the Tatlin tower was an inspiration for the Jerde office, the towers that resulted were regular and festive but finally limited in their aesthetic power. Gehry's addition, a wide but shallow "facade" applied over the existing museum building, better captured the spirit of the Tatlin tower with its torqued volume, airplane detailing, and unexpected juxtaposition of object elements. A jet fighter was fixed on the facade, like a broach, at a willful, soaring angle.

The one sweeping and decisive design scheme planned by the architects that would have given Los Angeles the equivalent of a Christo—art at a monumental scale, appropriate in a city of geographic rather than civic space—unfortunately did not materialize. David Meckel, design program manager for The Jerde Partnership, tried to place powerful klieg lights on Mulholland Drive, along the crest of the Santa Monica Mountains, but the plan fell through for lack of funding.

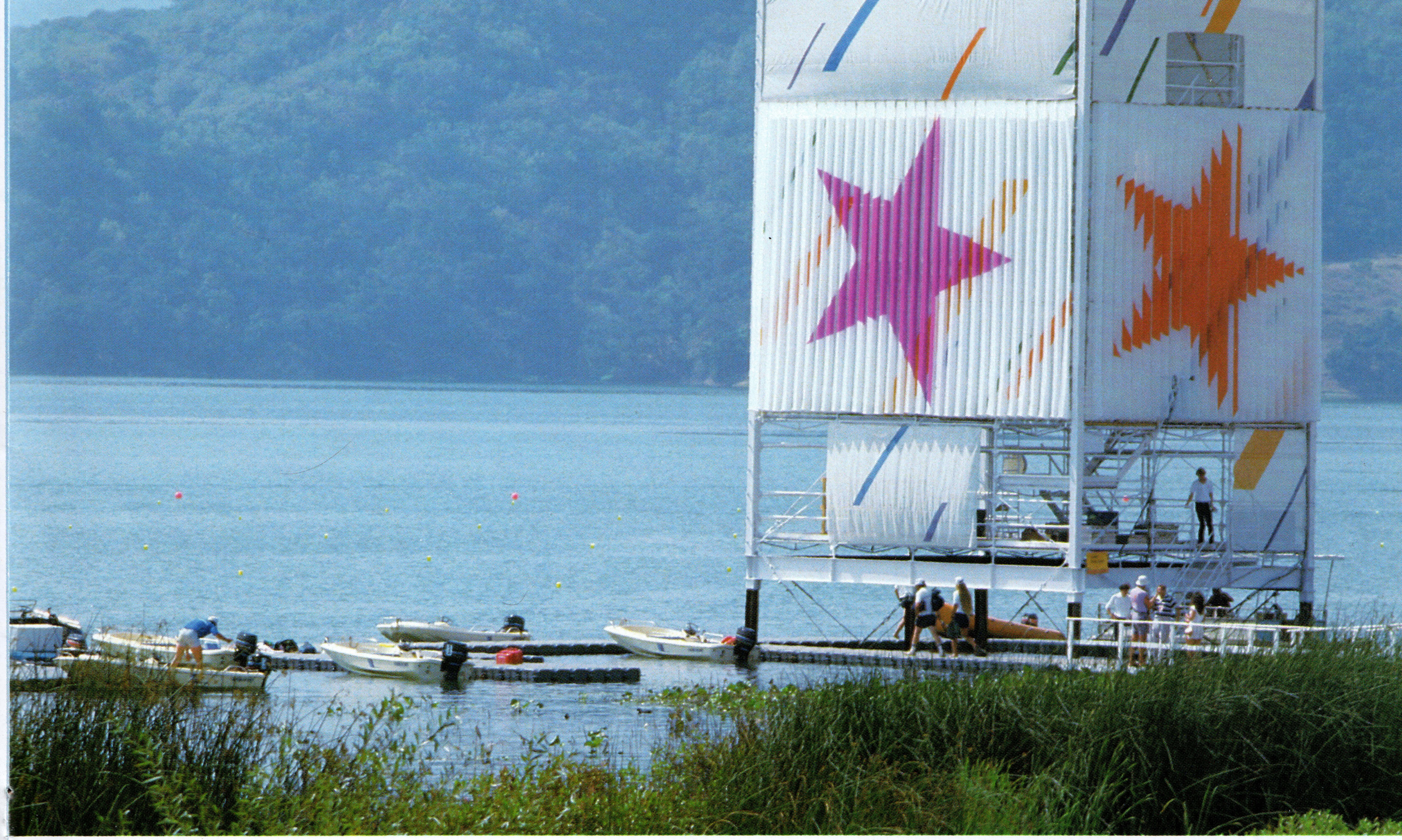
★ FENCES

Mesh fabric covered many miles of chain link security fence. Irregular patterns worked where the fence did not run straight.



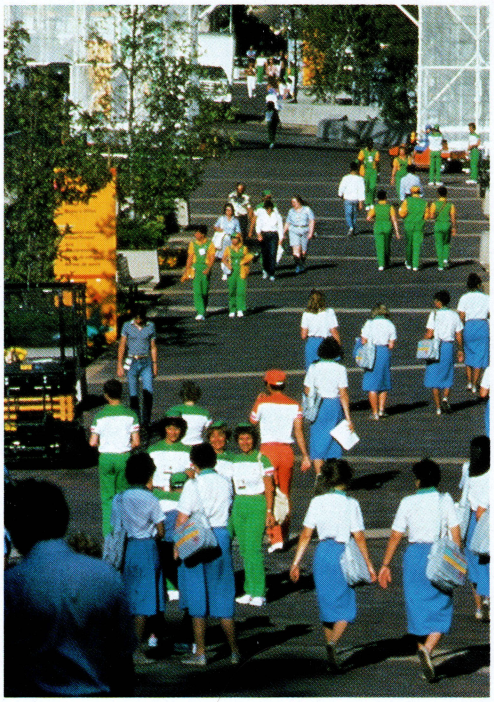


". . . whole prairies of magenta, vermilion and aqua cloth."



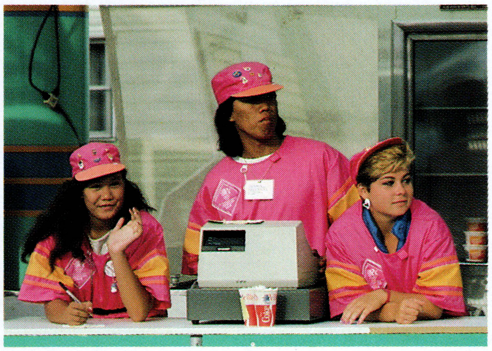
Balloons at Lake Casitas, *opposite*, mimicked the rowing lanes. The stars on the judges' tower changed color as the viewer moved.

AN INVASION OF BUTTERFLIES



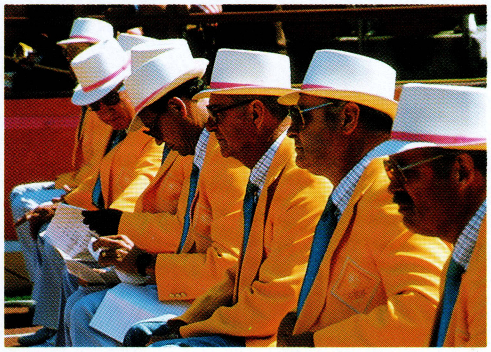
★ UNIFORMS

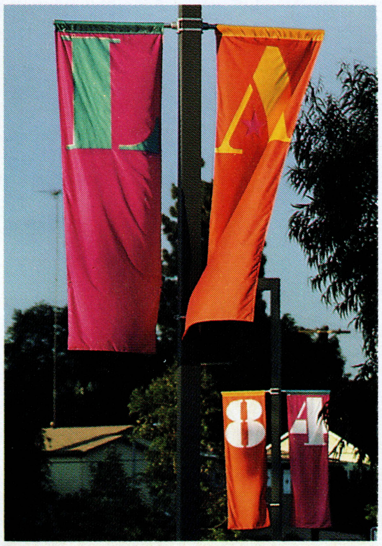
With their color-coded uniforms, the crowds of officials, employees and volunteers were part of the environment.

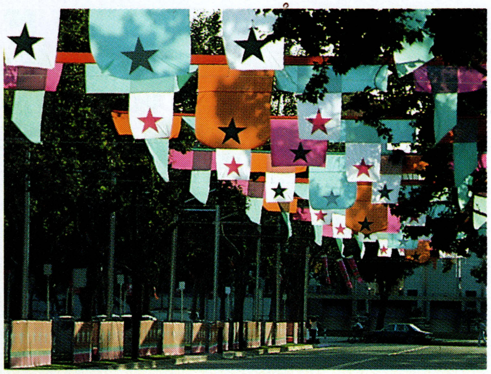


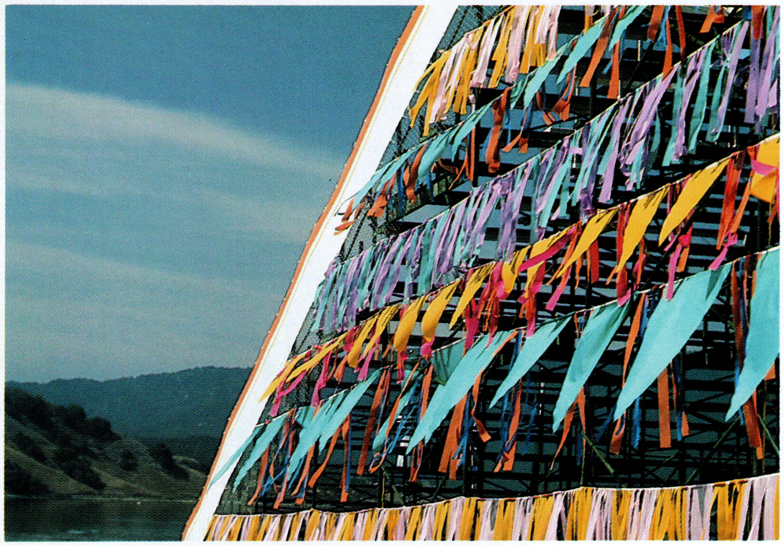
★ BANNERS

The boulevards of Los Angeles were lined with banners. Density increased and color intensified in the vicinity of the competition sites.



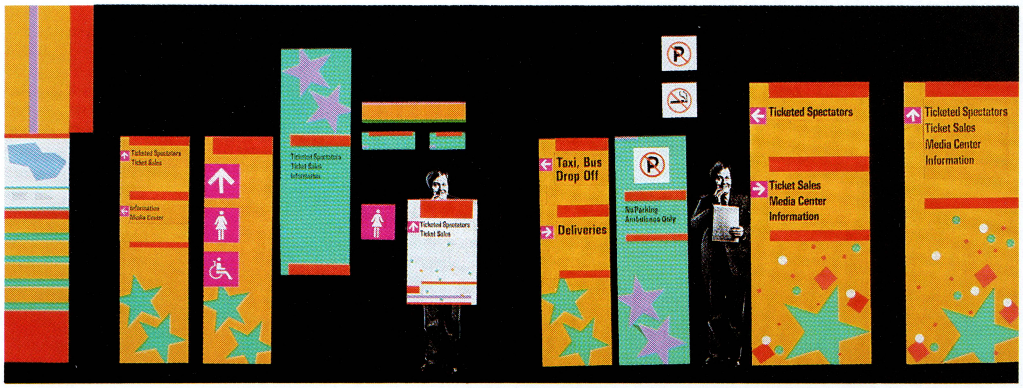






★ SIGNS

A flexible system of signs used inexpensive materials: styrene panels, hollow core doors and Sonotubes. The yellow, vermilion, aqua and violet signs were designed to be decorative as well as functional.


Ticketed Spectators
Ticket Sales
Information
Media Center
Taxi, Bus
Drop Off
Deliveries
No Parking
Ambulance Only
Ticketed Spectators
Ticket Sales
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Ticketed Spectators
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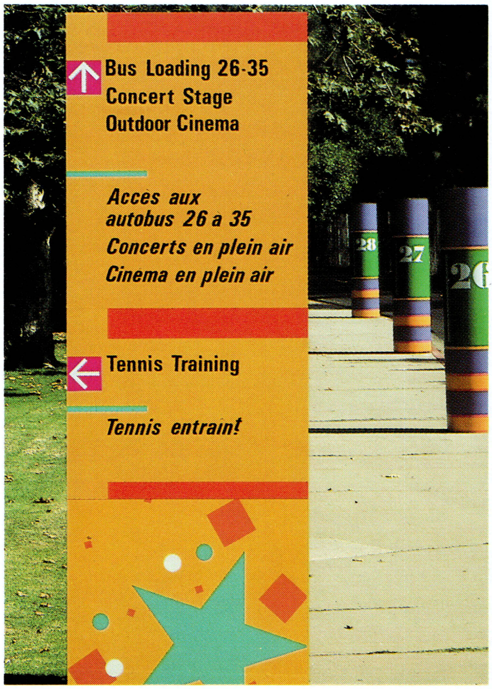
Information


Bus Loading 26-35
Concert Stage
Outdoor Cinema
Acces aux
autobus 26 a 35
Concerts en plein air
Cinema en plein air
Tennis Training
Tennis entrain!
28
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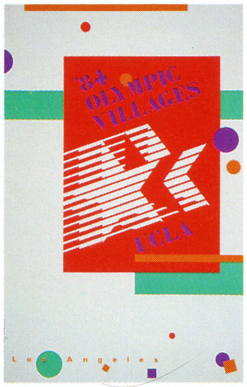
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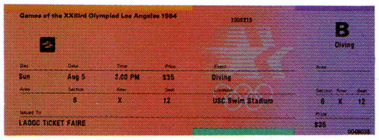
★ PRINT

The print graphics program: tickets, posters, packaging, stationery and publications, continued the Festive Federal colors and motifs.


Games of the XXIIIrd Olympiad Los Angeles 1984

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Diving

Day	Date	Time	Price	Event	Area
Sun	Aug 5	3:00 PM	$35	Diving	

Area	Section	Row	Seat	Location	Section	Row	Seat
	6	X	12	USC Swim Stadium	6	X	12

Issued To

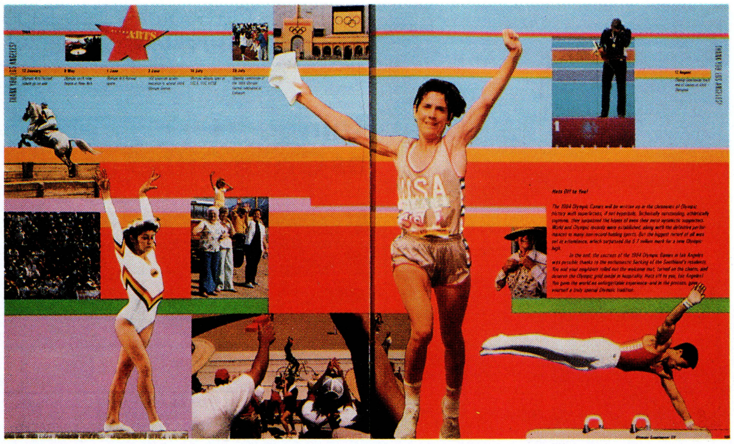
LAOOC TICKET FAIRE

Price

$35

0046033

Track & Field
Boxing
Swimming
Normandie Ave
3/4 MILE
Western
Ave



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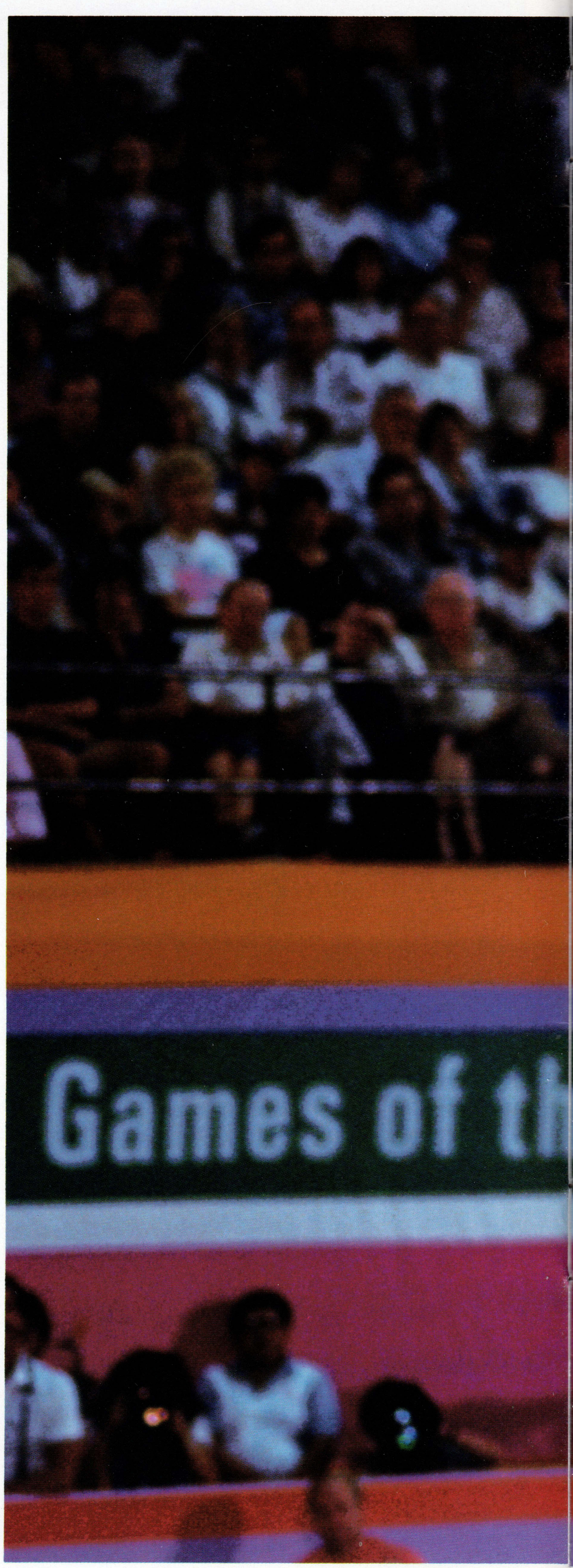
★ FIELDS OF PLAY

A consistent graphic backdrop gave the Games a visual unity despite the variety of arenas and playing fields.

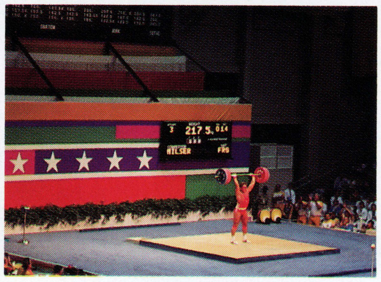


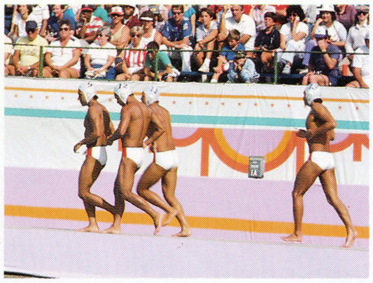
On the opening day, 28 July, my walk to the Coliseum, through the USC campus, the Rose Garden, by Frank Gehry's Aerospace Museum, and into the esplanade of Exposition Park, turned out to be a promenade through a dense concentration of the Olympic design kit.

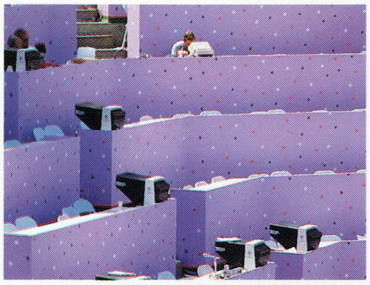
This is an area of Los Angeles that rarely comes to life—too much space for the usual number of visitors. But at least this Saturday, the grounds made ample urbanistic sense as crowds moved between the USC area along the central axis of the Rose Garden and the Coliseum. The beaux arts facades of the flanking buildings gave the promenade an architectural pomp worthy of the occasion—it was a stage designed for such spectacles as the Olympics. Los Angeles indeed has huge public spaces and, characteristically, they are gardens. Within the large-scale formality, colonnades of Sonotubes gave the Rose Garden the feeling of festivity and occasion. Beyond, on the grounds around the stadium, where Archisystem had deployed the kit of parts, there was a wide range of temporary structures and decorations, from pavement paintings and oriental tree streamers to two huge towers of scaffolding faced with glittering reflectors. The area north of the Coliseum looked like a medieval war campaign or a tournament, with groupings of white concession tents. Larger tents were situated around one of the towers.

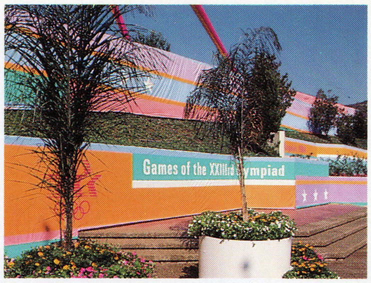
Though the scale of all these preparations at so many sites was huge, the details were finely tuned: the nylon was taut, the tents clean, everything in place. On a visit to the Park, Deborah Sussman noted to a member of the construction crew that the stiff little pennants on top of the "look" tents should all fly in the same direction, as though there were wind and they were real. If a nylon tarp became detached, it was noted and quickly adjusted.

Unlike the heroic tensile structures at Munich, by Frei Otto, the shape of the rented tents was standard and modest. At Exposition Park, what might in fact have amounted to a motley array of small,








Games of the XXIIIrd Olympiad

he XXIIIrd Olympiad
Los A gel es 1984

well-intended parts was given a uniformity by keeping them to the same height, so that the base of the roofs all shared a common height. This consistency was necessary to maintain some order, especially when the grounds were swarming with spectators.

The designers' colors were especially vivid given cooperative weather, and the relative absence of smog. Tent tops, with their thin material, were ignited by the sun during the day, and by lights turned upwards at night. The Coliseum itself was ringed with long pennants held directly out from the wall so that they would furl and be back lit. Made of nylon, the pennants were sensitive to the least nuance of wind.

My walk to the Coliseum was a somewhat episodic amble of discoveries. However, when I inadvertently came across the Olympic gateway statue by the Los Angeles sculptor Robert Graham, I came to a dead stop. I had seen the sculpture before, but this time I had been preoccupied with the rest of the site and was not expecting to see it. The sculpture acted on me with great force. The concentration in the torsos of the male and female nudes atop the gateway, the density

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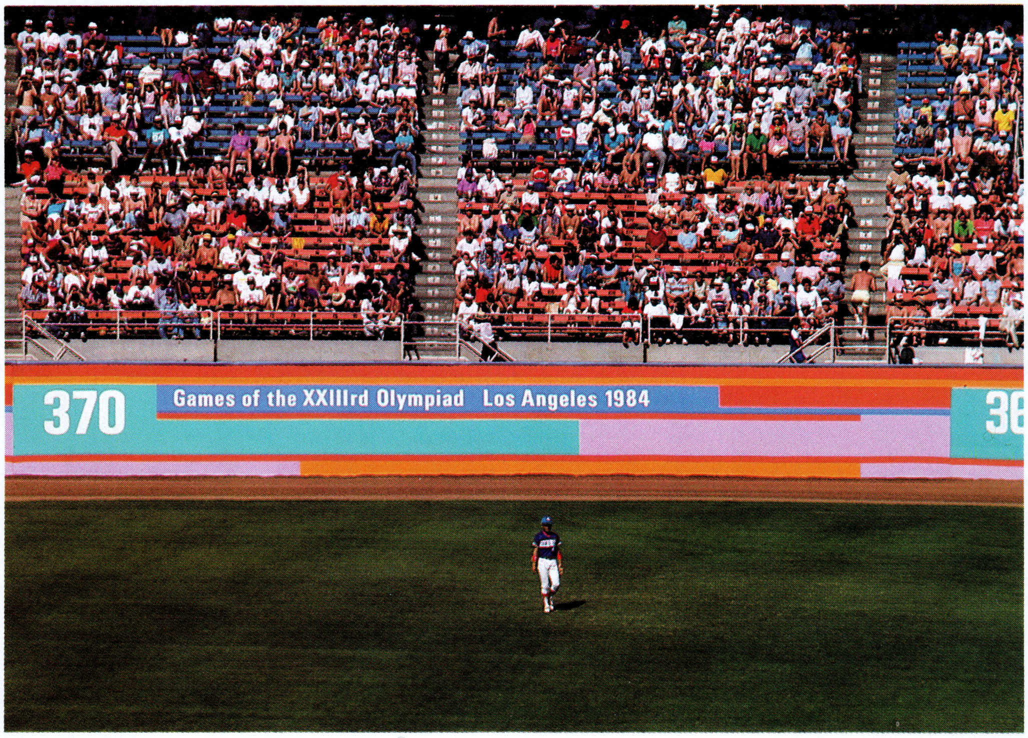
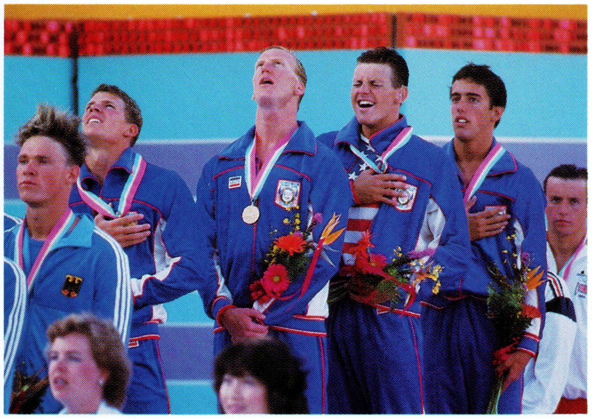
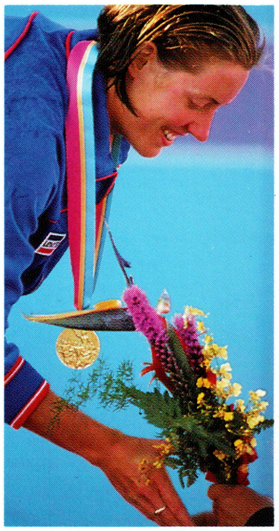


The details, athletes numbers, the track and field equipment, the flowers, were considered and carefully designed. These smaller things appeared again and again in photographs.

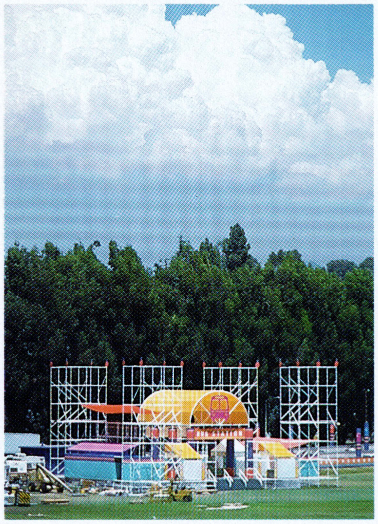
"What was especially nice about the bouquets is that they caught everybody by surprise. There are no flower T-shirts or hats or pins. We will just have to remember, happily, that '84 was the Flower Games."





in the musculature and the dark opacity of its surfaces made the work utterly serious. And here, it was a surprising reminder of the athletics that the surrounding festival tents were celebrating. If the temporary decoration was light, the statue immediately brought the Games back to their purpose: the figures represented the meaning of why we were here.

The gateway, on axis with the allée of trees leading off Figueroa Street, clearly marked a special spot on these otherwise undifferentiated grounds—it was, in fact, here that people agreed to meet, and here that people had established an informal marketplace, scalping tickets. Graham, who had at one time created erotic miniatures, here produced a macrocosm rather than microcosm, by placing the



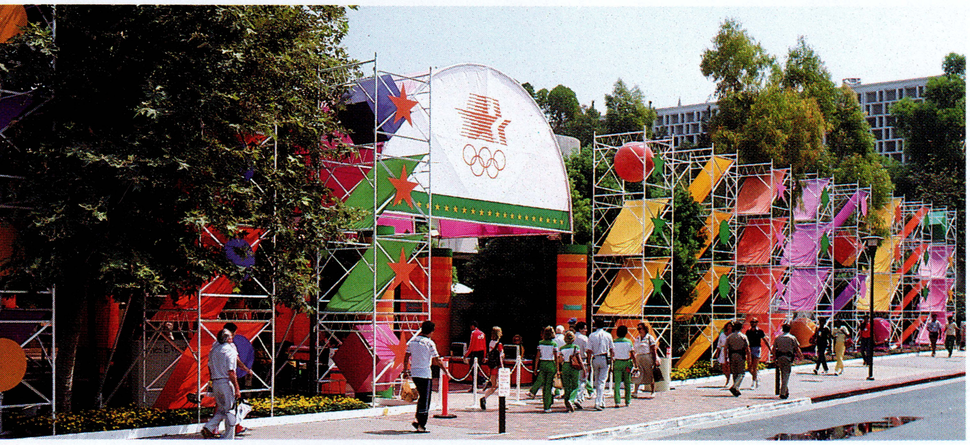
★ **UCLA VILLAGE**

The bus station, *above*, was the athlete's gateway to the training and competition sites.

sculpture on axis with the grounds. The sculptor raised the figures on round columns, making a gateway that the torch could pass beneath—the flame would, Graham expected, charge the sculpture with a sense of the occasion, and give that flame a specific place in Los Angeles. Unfortunately, for reasons that were never made clear to the sculptor, the flame went on a different route, bypassing the sculpture. Rerouting the flame was a great failure of poetry for the Olympics.

At the precise moment I entered the Coliseum, the opening ceremony started. I had just passed through a vermilion *entrada* when I heard a loud whooshing noise to my left—I didn't know, and didn't even have the time to wonder, what it came from: I simply looked. Just under the peristyle at the head of the stadium, a man in a space suit was taking off. Powered by a jet backpack, the man actually shot across the stadium, through the air, without wires, accompanied by the sound of this enormous whoosh. The flight lasted perhaps twenty seconds, but it was a tremendously exciting and declarative beginning for what turned out to be one of the best orchestrated, large outdoor performances I have ever seen.

OLYMPIC VILLAGES



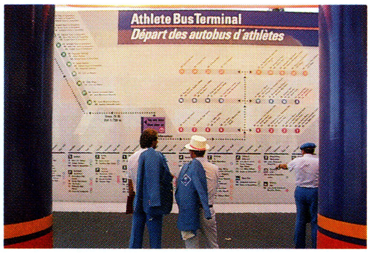
In the vastness of the stadium, the confetti and kit of parts did not form the environment but simply punctuated it. All the *entradas* were painted and the base of the seating was lined with a running strip of Olympic colors, slipped together irregularly. Officials wore suits, color coded to denote the function of the individual. As they walked across the field or down the track, they seemed like small urban fragments chipped off a larger order. The costumes were designed so that people would appear to be columns.

The genius of that afternoon was not only in pageantry, but also in pace—it was always unfolding. If the opening was somewhat Hollywood, this was appropriate, because Hollywood is a local industry and a type of local art form. This colossal musical, however, transcended itself when it climaxed in Beethoven's Ode to Joy theme from the *Ninth Symphony,* which the orchestra played unmercifully. It is a piece of music that seems constantly to exceed itself. The symphony was followed by the entrance of the flame into the arena, carried first by Gina Hemphill, the granddaughter of Jesse Owens, and then by Rafer Johnson. It was Mr. Johnson who took the flame up the side of the stadium, then up a flight of steps, to within reach of a gas-filled channel. The torch touched the low end of the channel, then worked its way up, somewhat tenuously, to and through channels of the Olympic rings, until it reached and lit the bowl. The Games were on.

The idea of a kit of parts is at least as old as the tinker-toy, but in southern California, it was a philosophical basis of the work of Richard Neutra and the Eames office. Deborah Sussman and David Meckel, of The Jerde Partnership, had both worked for the Eameses.

The essential task was, of course, to design the parts well, on the theory that the final assemblage of parts will work because the pieces, the connections and their integration have been thought out. With so many sites, however, it was impossible for the Jerde and Sussman firms to oversee how the kit of parts was used,

> *"It was all like a Sousa march: color without substance, or champagne with bubbles and promise without commitment. It is Gilbert and Sullivan—exquisitely crafted froth."*



so other firms were assigned to take the generic parts and create site-specific designs from them. There would be consistency across all the sites, but also tailored responses to particular conditions and some personal expression within a pre-established range.

What was perhaps new was that although a kit of parts is essentially an industrial idea, implying serial production ad infinitum, the imagery the architects chose to work in—a vocabulary of primary forms, such as pyramids, cylinders, vaults and arches—has implications of being finite. These forms are centered and centering; they are not an undifferentiated grid or field of repetitive units, but discrete objects. It was an industrial approach, but a pre-industrial imagery.

Sussman/Prejza developed not only a palette but rules for the application of the colors. The colors were not to be used in a graded way, like a rainbow. Three or more colors would be used in combination, thick bands next to thin, or against a large color field. The "How not to" section of *A Preview of the Design for the 1984 Olympic Games,* read, "Do not use light and dark combinations of the same color . . . when using stripes, do not make them all the same width . . . . Do not use red, white and blue as a decorative color scheme."

The principal colors—magenta, vermilion, aqua and chrome yellow— and the secondary and tertiary colors— yellow, green, lavender, light blue, violet, blue, pink, had collectively, a temperament of levity. "Everybody who goes to the warehouses gets a grin," said David Meckel. "It was like walking into a candy store." Ray Eames commented that the official Olympic colors—blue, yellow, green, red and black were a European palette—and that the Sussman colors had expanded the palette to Asia. The designers used pure colors, with none of the subtle shadings, the underlying nuances that the Sussman office has used in the past. In the designers' bold juxtapositions, the colors could in fact be strong if not heavy, and especially in the southern California light, their brilliance often set them into vibration.

The highly developed color program sensitized people even to natural colors. The blue of the sky, the green of the playing field, the red of the track were all brought out in the Coliseum, for example, by the costumes of the officials, the *entradas,* and the large band area. The vermilion was extraordinary against some of Los Angeles's vermilion sunsets. Part of the palette, for all its international implications, might have been taken out of the California sky.

Despite the idea and the romance of confetti, the kit of parts developed by the designers was strongly architectonic, with the ability to shape and control space. Besides the tents, columns were perhaps the basic element: columns used in colonnades, such as Sonotubes next to the peristyle of the Coliseum, under the flame; Sonotube columns to "support" the tents; columns at entries. The Sonotubes were striped to imply a base, shaft and top— though the even intensity of colors along the whole tube tended to blur this distinction. Some of the elements, such as the huge barrel vault of the gateway to the UCLA Olympic Village, were specially fabricated. In many cases fabric was stretched across skeletal forms, but only rarely did ribs show: the graphic architecture, for a maximum effect, had to have a taut skin, to appear flat. At this level of detailing, where a potentially whimsical material met structure, the connection was well conceived.

While there were many diameters of Sonotubes in the repertory, and many color combinations, some coded by function—yellow was usually for information—there was a limit to the size of the tubes. Here the designers resorted to structures of a different order—the scaffolding was not only convenient and modular, but capable of impressive heights. Large helium balloons, about thirty feet in diameter, marked each athletic site in the city.

The Village main street, *this page*, was cantilevered over the seating of an existing stadium.

"We used every set shop in Hollywood," said David Meckel. "We went to these guys and ordered forty pediments, a half-dozen twenty-five-foot wide Olympic rings, big stars, without working drawings. They could do anything." The local entertainment industry was tapped for much of the work; the designers were surprised to find that the set shops required only design drawings, elevations and plans. "Generally, they built it the way they wanted to," says Meckel. The columns were done by four or five paint shops, in high-gloss automotive enamel, brushed on. The ends of the columns were dipped in paraffin in case of rain. The fabricators pre-mixed the silkscreening inks and custom dyed all the fabric for banners. Silkscreening was done by six different companies.

Despite the palette, the kit of parts, the rules, the good intentions and computer assistance—which made the wide range of choice systematic and practicable—some of the venues were thinly decorated. At the core of this problem were three nearly insurmountable facts: too many sites, too little time, too little money. Some designers failed to transcend the limitations of their sites, and others did not develop an intuition for the kit. The Forum, for example, was surrounded by a large parking lot, and although some of the imagery came, however indirectly, from used car lots, it did not seem to return there. The oriental-type streamers were too thin to make much of an impact on a lot that large; the banners inside looked lifeless. Even at Exposition Park, a large area with a high density of small things, the effect was somewhat nervous. The tree streamers, small tents and towers broken up by reflectors were too small and disconnected to make a site that added up to more than its kit.

Certainly the most effective sites were the villages, where those who designed the parts also designed their application. At both the USC and the UCLA campuses, the designers transformed the spaces between the buildings—that ubiquitous element in the LA landscape, "the side yards of the city," said Jerde—into urban areas that had a sense of containment and intensity. The free-flowing Los Angeles landscape became here the plaza. Jerde said, "Modernism never taught us about communality. Now we're interested in twenty buildings at a time, making neighborhoods, communities."

A disco for the athletes was the centerpiece of the Village main street.

UCLA Village graphics combine the forms of Mondrian's *Broadway Boogie Woogie* with the colors of Ukrainian folk fabric.

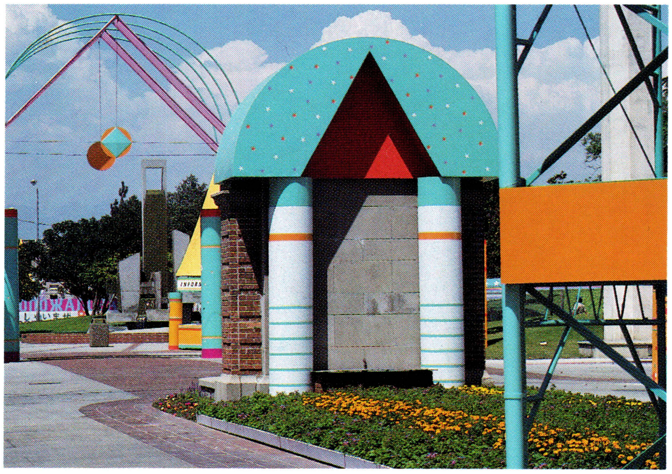
★ **USC VILLAGE**

The color and form variations at urban USC Village reflected the surrounding Florentine architecture with a Wizard of Oz attitude. The scaffold and nylon-banner street, *opposite*, was transformed at night by lighting. Olympic Plaza, *bottom*, was a gathering place for athletes.

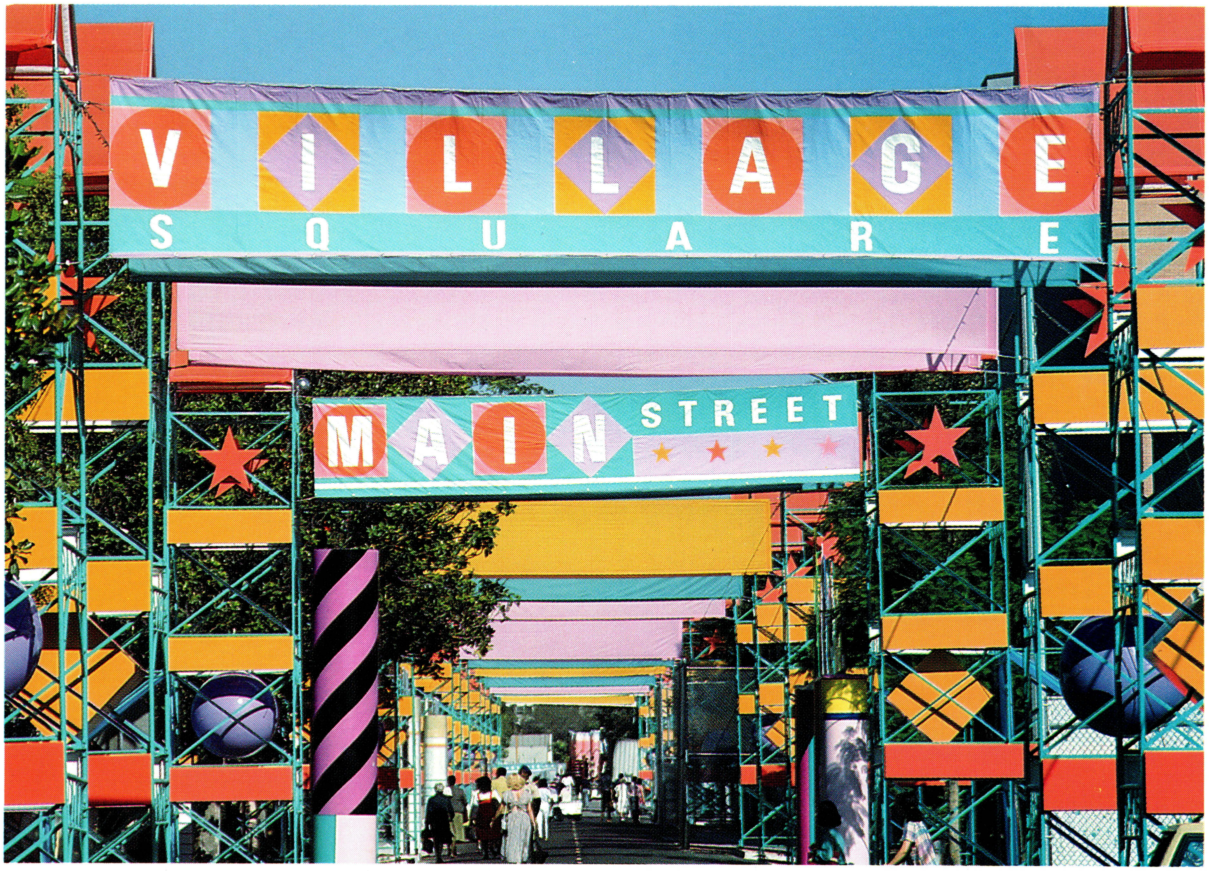
At both campuses, the designers created "main streets" in the landscape, with a regular placement of parts uniquely combined from the kit. Main street at UCLA was at the back of Drake Stadium, which Jerde had designed "as an eighteen-year-old," he said. At USC, main street, along one of the collegiate streets, was defined by a long row of box piers made of scaffolding; the metal cages carried injection-molded spheres and cubes, panels of color fabrics and assorted stars and pieces of confetti. Sonotube columns were placed between the piers, part of the enfilade. Continuous trays of flowers at the side of the street constituted a visual curb, and above, banners hung between piers helped decorate the space and contain it. The villages indeed acquired an intimate, dense, villagelike scale. Glenn Nordlow, a Jerde architect, wove fabric across the top of the facades of a campus office tower by Edward Durrell Stone, transforming the modernist structure into a decorative, humorous allusion to Michael Graves's Portland office building, which was first conceived with bunting.

OLYMPIC VILLAGES

"You don't have a building to work with, you have air. You string up cables and make things flutter."



At each campus the artist Peter Shire designed discothèques with mutant versions of the kit of parts—an environmental extension of the furniture and tableware he has long been designing. Not drawing on architectural history for his design, he was free to make columns look like spinning tops and barber poles. A band that looked like the base of one column was inverted a column over, so that it looked like a top: a row of jagged forms in abrupt colors constituted a frieze on a type of string course on top of the columns at the UCLA discothèque. The artist created a small forest of long-stemmed flowers from bent car and bus exhaust pipes, about fifteen feet high. The cartoonlike Shire forms, and the more architectonic, but still exuberant Jerde forms, brought out the humor in certain medieval-style buildings at USC and in the nearby Shrine Auditorium. Some of these permanent buildings were just as improbable as the temporary structures.

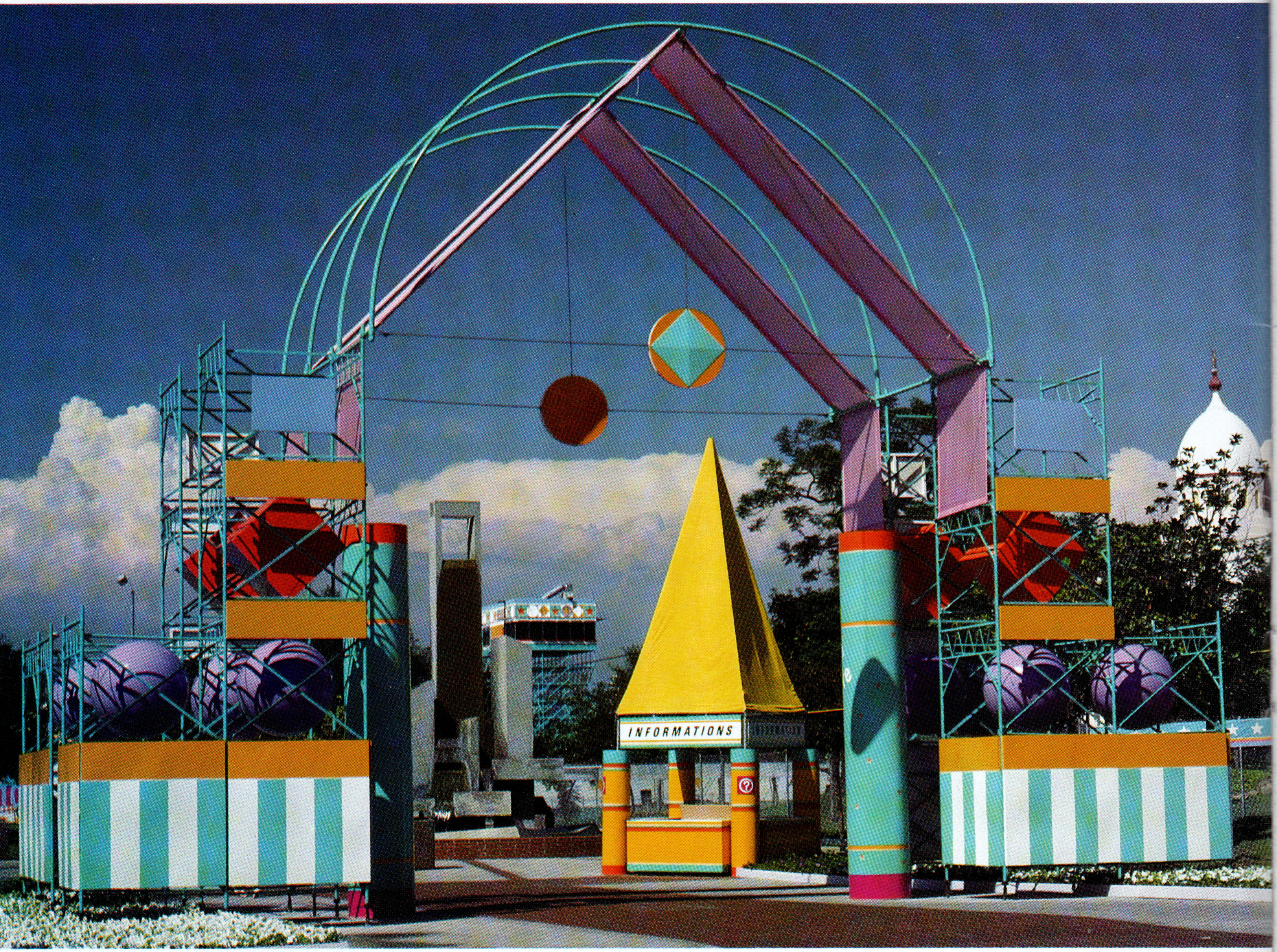


Everywhere in the villages there were flowers—beds of zinnias, impatiens and petunias, all in Olympic colors. They were scheduled to bloom during the Games, and were often arranged in confetti patterns.

The spirit of the decor successfully masked the fact that these villages were high-security areas, which could easily have looked like detention camps. The chain link fencing used at all sites at the villages was usually a double fence and especially high, but covered in paint and confetti-spattered fabrics.

Sussman expressed what seemed to be the only appropriate anxiety in this environment of festive ephemera when, just as the USC Village was being completed, she looked up at some gathering clouds to see if it might rain on the party.

Daily life in Los Angeles normally transpires behind a wheel, in a house, in a backyard and in an office, but it is, generally, not a collective life. There are, of course, the movies, church, concerts and sports events, but great collections of people in the city are an occasional rather



than a usual occurrence. Last summer, what became clear in audiences gathered for an abnormally high number of performances, exhibitions and sports events, over a two and a half month period, was that Angelenos have a characteristic temperament that made the city especially well suited to host the Games. There was a spirit of cooperation and good nature in the crowds: if there was scalping, it was surprisingly courteous; seat neighbors chatted; guards were helpful but not officious; when there was a line, there was no shoving.

If you can dress a temperament, Los Angeles was very well dressed by the graphic and architectural programs that were so visible. The colors, the printed material, the kit of parts, and most of the structures assembled from the kit, had a collective spirit that was exuberant, positive, welcoming, sophisticated, fresh and organized. The LA character is an independent one, capable of risk. That the visual program was hardly cautious—the comfortable trap would have been a corporate look so typical of much graphic art now done in the US—is not only a testimony to the talents of the designers, but also to the openness of the LAOOC managers.

Although the imagery was non-monumental, it was a monumental operation. The logistics alone were staggering. One enormously telling aspect of the way in which the Games were held was that it was generally felt the Games in Los Angeles had strengthened an Olympics threatened in the international arena.

Los Angeles now looks much as it did before the Olympics: the butterflies have left the grove. But an imperceptible change remains. Los Angeles has been coming of age for a long time, especially over the last decade, but with the Olympics, it seems to have at last arrived. If Los Angeles will not be the same again, and if the city will not be looked at in the same way again, it is because the city survived what was, from an urban point of view, a rite of passage, and it did so with flying colors.

"It will be impossible not to understand from the colors, patterns and logo always in view that this is Los Angeles, 1984."

An information kiosk nestled within a monumental gateway at USC Village, *opposite left*. A fabric marquee, *above*, announced the entrance to the athletes' stores.

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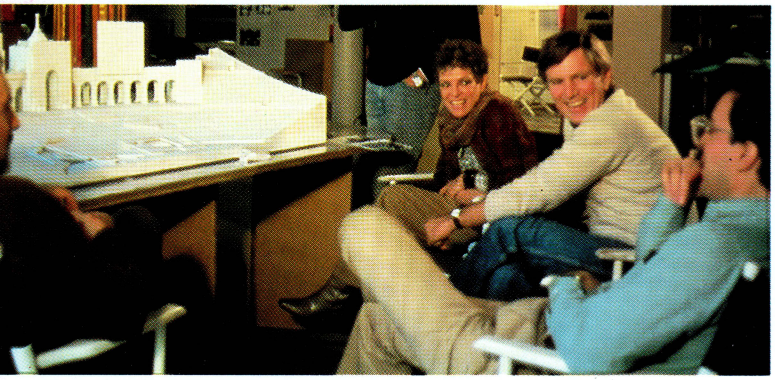

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